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THE OLD ORDER CHANGES

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AMONGST THE MOUNTAINS.

From a sketch by the Earl of Mount-Edgumbe.

THE OLD ORDER CHANGES

A Novel

BY

W. H. MALLOCK

AUTHOR OF 'IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?' 'SOCIAL EQUALITY' ETC.

'Cette importune économie politique se glisse partout et se mêle à tout, et je crois vraiment que c'est elle qui a dit, *nihil humani a me alienum puto*'—BASTIAT

NEW EDITION



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1892

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THE OLD ORDER CHANGES.



BOOK I.



CHAPTER I.

AMONGST THE MOUNTAINS.

‘MR. CAREW, tell me. Do we ever meet without getting on this question? We discussed it the night before you left London. I only came across you again yesterday afternoon; and see, already we are once more in the middle of it.’

‘It is the only question,’ said Carew, ‘that to me has any practical interest. If our old landed aristocracy ever come to an end, *my* England will have come to an end also; and I shall buy a château in some Hungarian forest. I should not be leaving my country: my country would have left me. You don’t understand me—perhaps I shall never make you. In these social discussions what stands in our way is this: there are so many things which it is very vulgar to say, and which yet at the same time it is vulgar not to feel. However, Mrs. Harley, at a more convenient season, vulgar or not vulgar, I shall come back to my point.’

‘Very well,’ she answered, as she looked at him with a smile of amusement. ‘But never—I tell you beforehand—you will never make me a convert. I’m sure,’ she went on as the idea suddenly struck her, ‘if a stranger overheard us discussing vulgarity here, he would think the subject of our conversation a little out of keeping with the scene of it.’

This observation was certainly not unjustified. They were standing by the side of a lofty mountain road, with a bank of savage rocks abruptly rising behind them, and a weather-stained crucifix, almost lost in the gathering shadows, was stretching its arms over them with a cold forlorn solemnity.

The lady was a handsome woman in the girlhood of middle age. The man was apparently some few years younger ; if not handsome, he had a certain air of distinction ; and his face was shadowed, if not lit up, by thought. A few paces away from them two other men were standing ; and the pair of disputants, as they brought their discussion to a close, by common consent moved forward and joined their companions. One of these last, so far as appearances went, was remarkable chiefly for the extreme shabbiness of his dress, coupled somewhat incongruously with a look of the completest self-satisfaction. The other, on the contrary, was the very picture of neatness, from his well-trimmed beard to his hand with its sapphire ring. It was at once evident that he was the lady's husband.

'Listen, George,' she said, laying her hand on his arm. 'As the carriage is so long in coming, I shall go back and sit in it till the coachman sees fit to start ; and you, gentlemen, I shall leave you here to look at the view until I pick you up. No, don't stir, any one of you ; I would rather go alone. If you must know the truth, I am the least bit sleepy, and shall do my best to close my eyes for a minute.' And with a slight but decided wave of the hand, she moved away from them with a firm and elastic step, and was presently lost to view behind an angle of the descending road.

The three men who were thus left to themselves did as they had been told to do, and inspected the view in silence. It was certainly worth the trouble. On either side, and below them, forests of pine and olive fell like a silent cataract over the enormous slopes of the mountains, and, rising again from innumerable dells and gorges, seemed to pour

themselves over pigmy promontories into the faint sea below. Meanwhile the sky overhead was clear, and was already pierced by one or two keen stars, and leagues of a red sunset were lying along the aërial sea-line. It was a scene which at any time would have been striking enough to the imagination, and it was doubly striking now in this soft and deepening twilight. But what mainly gave it its peculiar and romantic character was one solitary object which appeared to dominate everything, as it faced the road from the opposite side of a hollow. This was an isolated and precipitous rock which, rising abruptly out of a sea of foliage, lifted high into the air a dim cluster of buildings. A stranger might have been tempted to ask whether such a seemingly inaccessible eagle's nest could be in reality a collection of human structures at all, and whether what looked like houses, towers, and ramparts were more than spikes of crag or scars on the bare cliff. The questioner, however, had he cared to look steadily, would have at once been answered by some wreaths of ascending smoke; and still more conclusively by the sudden note of the Angelus; which in a few moments vibrated from a domed belfry. It was a singular cracked sound, but it was not unmusical; rather it was like music in ruins, and it filled the mind with a vague sense of remoteness—a remoteness both of time and place.

'I expect,' said Carew, in a tone of dreamy soliloquy, as if it had acted on him like a kind of mental tuning-fork—'I expect that a stranger of any kind is a rare apparition here, and, judging from the road, a carriage one rarer still. Look at these loose stones. They tell their own tale plainly enough. Little disturbs them from year's end to year's end but the peasants' boots and the hoofs of the peasants' mules. Listen: at this moment there are mule-bells tinkling somewhere, and here come some of the very peasants themselves.' As he spoke a procession of sombre figures, in clusters of twos and threes, slowly emerged out of the twilight, and defiled past them towards the foot of the old town. They

were men with slouch hats and shy glancing eyes. Some of them bore on their backs burdens of some kind; others were driving by their side a fantastic shaggy goat; and presently those descending were met by another procession—a small caravan of heavily laden mules with their conductors. Carew stared at these visions as they gradually melted out of sight; and then with a smile, turning round to his friends, ‘Are they really men,’ he said, ‘or ghosts out of the middle ages?’

‘Upon my word,’ said Harley, ‘one does in a place like this very nearly forget in what century one is living. Railways and intelligent voters seem little more than a dream. The old town on the hill, as we see it now against the sky, is just like a single huge castle the stronghold of some robber baron. There is only one thing wanting to make the effect complete, and that is for the baron himself to suddenly appear with his men, seize on our friend Stonehouse here, and send us two back for the ransom.’

The shabby man, who had hitherto remained perfectly silent, being thus alluded to, took a glance at his threadbare waistcoat, and plucking out a button that was hanging on by a thread, jerked it away with a smile of amused indifference. ‘I am afraid,’ he said, ‘that the robber baron would find a very poor capture in me. I have, unless I happen to have dropped it, exactly four francs and fifteen centimes in my pocket; and Carew’s scarf-pin or our excellent Harley’s watch-chain would buy me up as I stand ten times over. My dear fellows, I am the happy *vacuus viator*; and as I intend to walk part of the way back, you will no doubt think it lucky for me that I am. But, bless my soul,’ he exclaimed, suddenly facing round with a small prim smile of minute but condescending interest, ‘what the deuce can be coming now? I doubt if we have this seclusion so completely to ourselves as we thought we had.’

What had caught his attention, and that of the two others also, was a sound of wheels and horses, evidently approaching them—not up the hill, as their own carriage

5) would have done, but down it ; and in another moment a light presented itself which, considering the place and hour, might well cause some surprise in them. This was a large open landau, with a servant on the box by the coachman, which was descending the road slowly with a lumbering and uneasy caution, and the body of which, to make matters the more strange, was seen, as it passed, to be altogether empty. There were, however, a number of wraps and cloaks dimly visible upon the cushions, and amongst them, in particular, the glimmer of a white shawl. The three men watched it go by in silence, and then broke out together into expressions of conjecture and astonishment.

Presently the shabby man, with a gesture of grave facetiousness, exclaimed, 'Of course—I know what it is exactly. It is the chariot of some *milor* who is making the grand tour. We shall very soon see another carriage following it, with the baggage, the lady's-maid, the valet, the courier, and the blunderbuss. My dear Harley, you are perfectly right. One could almost fancy one was one's own great-grandfather.'

'Carew,' said Harley, 'devoutly wishes he was. Look at him ! His eyes have gone back again to the old town and its battlements ; and he is meditating over those coats of arms which he found above the castle gateway.'

The shabby man turned to Carew with a lazy stare of amusement, which, though perfectly good-natured, was only not impertinent because it happened to be not fixed on a stranger. 'Are you a herald,' he said, 'amongst your other many accomplishments ? How droll now ! How excessively droll !'

'I am a herald only,' said Carew, with a slight dryness of manner, 'in matters of family history. With the shields of which Harley speaks I was interested for a peculiar reason. We, in the seventeenth century, were connected by a marriage with the Lascaris, who were once seigneurs in this part of the country ; and I was pleased to find above

one of those mouldering arches two of the quarterings which are above our own lodge gates at Otterton to-day.'

'Indeed!' said Harley. 'Otterton is a very fine old place, isn't it?'

'It is,' said Carew; 'only two thirds of it are in ruins.'

'This,' went on Harley, 'about the coats of arms is really extremely interesting——'

The shabby man, however, did not appear to think so, and ignoring the information as though it were some unsuccessful joke, he placidly interposed with an air of subdued banter:—

'My dear Carew, now can you tell me what a chevron is, or a pellet? I am really immensely anxious to know something about a pellet.'

'Carew,' said Harley, in his turn ignoring the interruption, 'is exceedingly fortunate in his number of foreign relations. There are his Milanese cousins, who have offered him, during the spring, their beautiful island villa on the Lago Maggiore; and his French cousins, who have actually lent him the château where he is now.'

'A château!' exclaimed the shabby man, at once showing a little attention. 'You don't mean to say that you are living in a château?'

'Didn't you know?' said Harley. 'This lucky Carew has a castle amongst the mountains, lent him for the winter by his relation, the Comte de Courbon-Loubet. It's a genuine castle, with ramparts, tower, and scutcheons, and Heaven knows what else; and it has a bed in it in which Francis the First slept. So at least I discover in Murray's Guide Book.'

The smile of the shabby man by a subtle change now turned into one of more or less serious interest. 'A château in France!' he exclaimed, 'and a villa on an Italian lake! Upon my word, it's a finer thing than I thought to have a French count and an Italian marquis for one's cousins. But I only hope,' he added with a little inward chuckle,

‘that you won’t be getting into trouble with any more French countesses.’

Whatever this allusion may have meant, Carew did not seem much pleased with it, and contracted his brows slightly. The shabby man, whose eyes were sharp as a needle, detected this at once ; and in a tone of voice that was somewhat like a slight pat on the shoulder, said, changing the subject, ‘My dear Carew, one of these fine mornings I must drive over and breakfast with you.’

‘Do,’ said Carew ; and he was beginning some further civility, when the sound of wheels and horses was once more audible, coming this time up the hill and not down it.

‘Here,’ exclaimed the shabby man, with an almost childish satisfaction—‘here is our carriage at last ! I was beginning to get a little bit in a fidget about the time ; and—let me breathe it in your ear—I am also positively ravenous.’

His satisfaction, however, proved to be premature. A carriage indeed it was which was now ascending ; but it was not their own : it was the other which had just passed them, and which was now returning, by the way it came, with its company. This proved to consist of an elderly gentleman, seated with his back to the horses, and two ladies opposite to him, one of whom seemed to be about the same age as himself, whilst the other was so muffled to the eyes in a soft white shawl that it was difficult, at a first glance, to form any conjecture about her. But, as she gradually drew nearer to the group at the roadside, above the cloud of the soft white shawl there became distinguishable a cloud of soft fair hair, and also a delicate hand that held the shawl against her lips. This became distinguishable, and something more than this—the glance of a pair of eyes, which at once, in spite of the twilight, sent a curious thrill through at least one of the party before he was clearly aware what it was that had caused it.

Carew—for it was he who had found himself thus susceptible—had just become conscious of this singular and

unexpected excitement, when, as the carriage was in the act of passing him, some light object fell from it, dropped by one of the occupants. In an instant he had stepped forward and rescued it, and, with his hand on the door, was presenting it—it was a fan—to whoever might be the owner. A word of pleasure in English escaped from the elder lady, who then proceeded to tender her thanks in French. The former, however, was plainly her own language ; and Carew was pleased to show her he was a fellow-countryman as he expressed a hope that the fan had not been broken. Meanwhile his eyes, under the kindly cover of the twilight, had sought those of her companion, and had not sought them in vain. He was one of those happy men who can look at a woman fixedly without the least air of impertinence ; and the woman he was looking at now seemed possessed of the yet rarer faculty, that of returning such a look without the least air of immodesty. In her eyes, as they fixed on his with all their soft fulness, there was not only an abandonment to the impressions and feelings of the moment, but mixed with the tenderness of a woman there was the steadfast frankness of a child.

Such a silent conversation between the two perfect strangers could, of course, under the circumstances, last a few moments only ; but by the time the carriage had again moved on Carew could have imagined that it had been an affair of hours. He felt as if he had been having some new experience, as if he had suddenly had a vision of some enchanting country in May—a land blooming with lilacs and hawthorns, its air breathing with all the longing of spring—a land of promise which filled him with the desire of exploring it. In an instant he was sunk deep in a reverie ; and so strangely jealous had he unconsciously become of the subject of it, that he felt, and even showed, some slight irritation when Harley remarked to him, ‘What a handsome girl that was !’ To this he replied with little more than a grunt, and was then suffered to enjoy a brief respite of silence ; but before many minutes his thoughts were again

distracted, and for the time being their train was finally broken, by a sharp crunching sound of something being cracked close to him. This sound proved to proceed from the shabby man, who was beguiling the time and taking the edge off his appetite by eating a gingerbread nut. A few brown crumbs were still clinging to his lips, and as soon as he saw that Carew had noticed him, he produced another from amongst the folds of his pocket-handkerchief, and holding it out, said, with his mouth full, 'Have one?'

The offer being declined, he bit a large crescent out of it himself, and then went back to a point he had before touched upon—the lateness of the carriage and his own impatience in consequence. He was at last relieving his feelings by saying to Harley, 'I am afraid that this robber baron we have all heard so much about has seized on it and carried it off—it, with your wife into the bargain,' when both made their appearance, and set his agitation at rest.

As soon as the party were settled, and had begun to move on, Carew asked Mrs. Harley if she had seen the interesting strangers. Mrs. Harley had; but she had not much to tell him about them, except that their carriage had met them at the foot of the old town, and that they must have walked down to it from the road above, through the olive woods. The conversation then turned to the old town itself; and Harley alluded to Carew's curious discovery—that of a 'family scutcheon,' he said, 'under the marquis's coronet on the gateway.' The shabby man, meanwhile, had been sunk in a placid silence, but this last remark suddenly roused his attention; and with an animation surprising in one who professed such an ignorance of heraldry, 'My dear Harley,' he said, 'that was not a marquis's coronet at all; it was the coronet of a French vicomte, which is a very different thing.' This was all he said till the rough road they had been ascending at last joined a magnificent beaten highway; and here, as the horses were just quickening their pace, he startled the coachman with a sudden call to stop.

'What on earth is the matter?' Mrs. Harley inquired of him.

‘Well,’ he said, ‘much as I dislike to leave this exceedingly pleasant carriage, I am obliged to get out here, and walk down by a mule path, through these terrific forests, to the little railway station which lies directly under us. I shall just catch the train, and my servant will meet me with a portmanteau. I arrive in that way forty minutes sooner than I should if I allowed myself the pleasure of being driven to Nice by you.’

Mrs. Harley was full of surprised remonstrances. ‘Surely,’ she ended by saying, ‘you can’t be in such a hurry as all that?’

‘The truth is,’ said the other, who was by this time in the road, ‘I am engaged to dine to-night with my friend the Grand Duke at Mentone; and as to time, upon these occasions I am always most punctilious. Besides,’ he added just as he was saying good-bye, ‘besides’—and he laid his finger on his nose with a kind of solemn waggery—‘you will observe that I save seventy-five centimes on my railway-ticket.’

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD ORDER.

‘WHO,’ exclaimed Mrs. Harley, as the figure of the shabby man disappeared from them, ‘would take him for the heir to one of the richest dukedoms in England?’

‘Stonehouse,’ said her husband, smiling, ‘always amuses me. Life in general he seems to regard as a kind of vulgar joke, which assumes a classical character when embodied in a great magnate like himself.’

‘I,’ said Carew, ‘should be the last person to abuse him; for on one occasion, with his shrewdness, he was an excellent friend to me. You remember, Mrs. Harley, the trouble I had with my uncle when he took it into his head I was going to marry that French lady. It was Stonehouse entirely who

managed to put things right for me. Still I must say this of him, and I don't mean it for a compliment. Though he may not look to a stranger like the typical heir to a dukedom, to all who know him he is the very type of a modern Whig—I mean,' Carew added, 'a Whig who is shrewd enough to see his position, and has no desire to hide what he sees from his friends.'

'I'm sure,' said Mrs. Harley, 'you, with your strong feelings about family, ought to find in Lord Stonehouse a man after your own heart. No one has those feelings more strongly than a genuine Whig.'

'There,' said Carew, 'is the very point where you miss my meaning. It is perfectly true that, as his father's heir no one sets a higher, though a less imaginative, value on himself than does Stonehouse; but of family feeling, in my sense of the words, he has nothing, or next to nothing. His family is for him not so much a family as a firm, which has been established so many years, and has so many millions of capital. I was amused just now to discover this in him—his knowledge of heraldry ends with the shape of his own coronet; and by the way, Harley, he was perfectly wrong when he tried to correct you about the coronet on the castle gate. That was the coronet, not of a French vicomte, but of a *maréchal* of France, which, seen at a distance, is very like that of a marquis. It has eight parsley leaves with a pearl between each, whereas the other is simply charged with four large pearls. I think it is four——'

'Really, Mr. Carew,' broke in Mrs. Harley, 'you remind me of a treatise on heraldry there used to be in my father's library, which began by saying that *hardly a subject existed more worthy of the attention of princes and of gentlemen than the origin of those titles and dignities which distinguish them from the rest of mankind.*'

Carew laughed good-naturedly. 'My dear Mrs. Harley,' he said, 'I'm not quite such a fool about these things as you think me. I may be prejudiced, but I don't think I'm insane. As for heraldic signs, of course they are signs merely. Is

our national flag more? That, in itself, is merely a rag of canvas. You may call it a scarecrow, or you may die for it. A coat of arms—I don't mean one supplied by the coach-maker—is for each family which is worth calling a family, the Union Jack of its own past: and what I am saying of Stonehouse and Whigs like him is, that for their past, as their past, they have no feeling whatever.'

'My dear Mr. Carew,' interposed Mrs. Harley, 'what is it but their past which keeps men like Lord Stonehouse from going over to the Conservatives?'

'They merely feel,' said Carew, 'like a true trading firm, that they would lose, if they did, the good-will of their political business; as a grocer would if he suddenly turned shoemaker. No doubt the Whigs value their past in one way. They know that it has a power over the opinions of others, and that it helps to surround them with a certain ready-made deference. Of course in this way it adds to their own self-importance, but only as might the possession of some remote ancestral castle, which they like to possess but have no inclination to visit. They are proud to think of it as a celebrated show-place which oppresses the imagination of the tourist, but which never elevates the imagination of the owner. It speaks *for* them, but it does not speak *to* them. They don't listen for the voice which haunts, if they would only hear it, every mouldering turret and every gnarled oak-tree; the voice which whispers to them that they are different from the rest of the world, not because they are rich, but that they are rich (if they happen to be so) because they are different from the rest of the world. It is only people to whom the past conveys this feeling who really know the meaning of the words *Noblesse oblige*.'

'If you are talking about Lord Stonehouse,' said Mrs. Harley, 'you are very possibly right. You know him far better than I do. But about the Whigs in general I am quite sure you are wrong. Look at the ——'s, look at the ——'s, look at the ——'s. No one—not the most bigoted

Tory in England—for bad and for good both, is more closely wedded than they are to this gratifying feeling you speak of.’

‘Well,’ said Carew, with a certain vindictive energy, ‘if they are wedded to it, they keep their wife locked up ; and they never speak in public without denying the marriage. However,’ he went on, ‘as I said just now, we will have all this out more fully some day. It shall be when you come to see me at my castle among the mountains. I am longing to show you that. Everything about us will be on my side there, and will explain my meaning, and I think make you agree with it—at all events partly. The old village still clings to the shelter of the feudal ramparts. In the valley below you look down on the lord’s mill, whose black wheel still turns in the blue-green snow-water. The villagers all touch their hats to you and seem proud of your presence. For miles round every hectare belongs to the House of Courbon-Loubet. The *concierge* delights in pointing out to a stranger certain of the scutcheons in the courtyard, and telling him that Monsieur le Comte has Bourbon blood in his veins ; and there is a huge five-sided tower, that still stands erect and stares at the landscape with all its old effrontery. Indeed, if it were not for a glimpse of the railway which that tower gives you, you could fancy that you were living before the French Revolution. Now, Mrs. Harley, when are you coming to see me, and leave the epoch of progress and the sovereign people behind you? Will you come next week? Do! I am expecting some friends then. You probably know them all ; and I am quite sure you will like them.’

Mrs. Harley’s eyes had been watching Carew curiously, with a mixed expression of interest, of dissent, and of amusement ; and gradually, though there was still a serious meaning left in them, they began to sparkle with an irrepressible wish to tease.

‘I’m afraid, Mr. Carew,’ she said, ‘your friends would be a great deal too smart for me. You know that is a point

on which we agree to differ. I don't like smart people, whether they are Whigs or Tories. I'm never at home or at my ease with them. I like the other people far better.'

Her words produced the exact effect she intended, and Carew's voice when he answered her had a trace in it of annoyed incredulity. 'I know,' he said, 'who you mean by *the other people*. You don't mean people who are something besides smart : you mean people who are something opposed to smart. You mean lions and celebrities, who are nothing but lions and celebrities, who have odd hair and vague wives and daughters, and who not only are cleverer than average people of fashion, but express their cleverness in a different social language. Now these people, if you wish to consult them on their own special subjects, are no doubt most interesting to meet, and it may be curious to watch their characteristics. But you surely—come, Mrs. Harley, be honest—you surely don't prefer them as friends, as daily companions?'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Harley, 'I do. I prefer them as friends, and as daily companions.'

'I,' Carew retorted, 'agree with De Tocqueville, and I think it the profoundest saying in his whole book on Democracy, that a man, if necessary, can learn to put up with anything except with the manners of some other class than his own. Of course I prefer just as you do a clever man to a fool ; but certainly, in a friend, the first thing I should look to would be, not that he should be fond of the same books that I am, but that he should look at society with the same inherited prejudices. However, happily, one can find friends who do both. There are surely plenty of people who are clever and smart as well.'

'Yes, clever, no doubt,' said Mrs. Harley. 'But to what use do they put their cleverness? What do they talk about? What do they think about? By what standard do they measure themselves and you? *They* are the smart set ; that is their great notion ; and if you don't belong to that, they think you are nothing and nowhere. And as for

manners—well, I can tell you this: I have seen worse manners amongst these same smart people than I have ever seen elsewhere in any class of society.’

‘Stop,’ interposed Carew. ‘We are talking of different things. You have run away with the word *smart*, which I merely used as a piece of convenient slang. You are talking about one small clique, the *personnel* of which is changing every season. You are talking about a clique; I am talking about a class, or, if you like it better, a caste. That particular clique may be as little in my line as in yours; but surely in the class of which it is proud to form a part—and of which, by the way, some of its members do not form a part—you will find as much culture and intellect as you will find anywhere else, with social qualities in addition which you will find nowhere else.’

‘I don’t deny for a moment,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘that there’s a sort of glamour about it all. There *is*. And besides, it is what oneself one was born amongst and bred up to. Even the people I was abusing just now—the clique as you call it—and it *is* a clique—through all their bad manners you can see that they are ladies and gentlemen.’

‘Exactly,’ said Carew; ‘they possess the very thing which your *other people* are, in spite of their talents, distinguished by not possessing. The difference need not always be grotesque or glaring; but, in so far as it exists, you surely must feel it a barrier between yourself and them. It is not merely a question of how to come into a room. It is a question of the whole perspective of life.’

‘Yes,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘and the people I call *my* friends are the people, I think, who see life most truly. I like them because they embody the real meaning, the real life of the time—its thought, its science, its art, its politics, even its dreams and its impossible aspirations.’

Carew paused for a moment, and then said abruptly, ‘Well, what do you say of our old Catholic families, and the circle within a circle formed by them? Is no meaning embodied there, or, if you like to call it so, no impossible

dream? As to politics, you are partly right about that, more's the pity : it's your *other people*, no doubt, who make the Radical thunderstorm. And yet, on second thoughts, if you stick to polite society, you can see the sheet lightning in the faces of Whigs like Stonehouse. Anyhow, Mrs. Harley, you must admit this : that, given what you require in the way of aspiration and intellect, this is seen to its best advantage, and is most congenial to yourself, when you find it in the world to which you yourself belong.'

'No,' said Mrs. Harley ; 'speaking honestly, I do *not* think so. I think that the polish and charm which characterise the world you speak of, and which I feel just as fully as you do ; I think that the unexpressed sympathy which exists between its members, and which forms so subtle and pleasant a link between them—I think that all this implies and is founded upon a set of beliefs and assumptions with regard to an aristocracy which, even if true once, are certainly true no longer. Once, no doubt, aristocracies did lead. Of whatever life there was in the world they were the centre. But things are changed. The centre is shifted now. Not only does the life of the world no longer centre in them ; it is not even what it was till very lately, a tune that is played under their windows. My dear Mr. Carew, there is no use in disguising the fact. Aristocracy as a genuine power, as a visible fact in the world, may not yet be buried, perhaps ; but it is dead.'

'Then, in that case,' said Carew, 'let me die with it. I am only thirty-five, but I have outlived my time, and few and evil have been the days of my pilgrimage. There are other things,' he added presently—'there are other things in my mind besides London drawing-rooms—the winter sunsets beyond the park ; the noise of rooks in the elm-trees over the graves of those who are nearest to me ; old servants ; the tower of the village church ; and the welcome once ready for me in every cottage in the village.'

He spoke with so much feeling that Mrs. Harley was anxious not to jar upon it.

‘In one thing at least,’ she said, ‘I think you are right. Amongst the old Catholic families of England, and amongst the converts who have been absorbed into them, there is an ideal, there is an aspiration to live for ; and I respect those who live for it, though with it itself I have no sympathy whatsoever. And yet,’ she went on reflectively, ‘even as Catholics their position narrows their views. I have seen it, I have felt it ; I have known and stayed with so many of them. There are my cousins the Burtons—a typical case if there is one. You know how those girls—no longer girls now, poor things !—were brought up. You know what Burton was in the old Lord’s time. I often think of poor Charley, with the three Italian priests who were his tutors ; the retainers, born on the property—you could hardly call them servants—that the whole place was swarming with ; the endless horses in the stables ; the constant coming and going ; the meets, the scarlet coats, and the foreign ecclesiastics—any number of them—gliding quietly up and down the huge passages. It was one of the last of the really great households in England. Well, and what has been the result in this generation on those who were brought up in it and amongst the ideas embodied in it ? As for Charley, well, we won’t say much of him ; but his sisters—they are really noble, high-minded women, full of intelligence, and anxious to do their work in the world ; but of the world they are so anxious to work in they know about as much as Don Quixote. They have just the same mixture in them that their parents had, of the intensest pride and the intensest humility. Each of these feelings is equally antiquated and equally genuine. They support each other like two cards in a card-house, and are about as fit as a card-house is to endure the weather of the century.’

‘About the elder ones,’ said Carew, ‘that may be quite true. I do not know them well. But you can’t say the same about their half-sister, Miss Consuelo.’

‘No,’ said Mrs. Harley, with a sudden access of animation. ‘In her, I admit, you come to a totally different thing. She

is like the others in some ways, certainly. She has all those prejudices for which you feel so much sympathy ; but there is a passion, and an energy, in her nature which cannot be satisfied with worn-out ways of showing themselves. She doesn't hear much of any new ideas, it is true ; but what she does hear of she drinks in, as a traveller in the desert would drink in drops of water. There is a hunger in her eyes, you can hardly tell for what—whether for a man to love or for some great duty to do—perhaps for both. I often think that, could she only find the conditions of life that would suit her—could she only find a husband who could really understand and help her—she would be the most interesting and the most remarkable woman I know. Have you seen her?’

‘Seen her?’ said Carew, half absently. ‘Why, I know her!’

‘I mean, have you seen her since she has been out here?’

‘Out here? Out where? I don't quite understand you.’

‘Did you not know,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘they have been here for the last fortnight—she and two of her sisters? They are in the hotel next to ours. Lord Stonehouse is there also, and takes excellent care of them. I must say, whatever his faults may be, he's most kind to his own relations.’

Carew, for a moment, looked as if he were going to speak. There was a light in his eye, a moment's surprise and start ; but his words died on his lips, and, leaning back in his seat, he stared absently at the view, as if he considered the conversation ended. Silence is nowhere so catching as in a carriage, and his two companions became silent also. Meanwhile, the road had begun descending. It no longer skirted the bare heights of the mountains, but was sweeping downwards in a series of curves and slopes. Above and under it were frequent masses of foliage. On either side of it, alternately, as it turned and circled, expanding inland landscapes showed themselves to the eyes of the travellers, glimmering far under the rapidly brightening moon ; and at last, like a large irregular crescent of stars, the lights of some large town were seen clustering along the sea, below them.

At this sight Carew suddenly roused himself, and said

abruptly : ' I shall sleep at Nice to-night. I told my servants I should very possibly do so.'

Mrs. Harley gave a faintly perceptible smile. ' Of course,' she said, ' you are going to dine with us ? We were counting on that in any case. If you like it, I will send over and ask the Burtons to meet you.'

Carew murmured an answer of acquiescence. ' Then again there was silence ; and hardly a word further was spoken till the wall of a villa garden made a white glare along the road-side, in the light of a gas lamp opposite, and they saw they were approaching the town, and that their day's expedition was ended.

CHAPTER III.

A PAGE OF ROMANCE REOPENED.

THE sense of the town roused them. In another moment they passed a suburban tramcar. The world they had just left, of forests, of laden mules, and of mouldering mountain strongholds, lay like a dream behind them. They were once again in the glare and rattle of to-day.

' Mrs. Harley,' said Carew, waking up into matter-of-fact alertness, ' you must really consider when you will let me expect you. Think over your plans this evening, and you shall tell me to-morrow before I go back to the château.'

' We have nothing to do next week, that I know of,' said Harley, turning to his wife ; ' and if Mr. Carew would really like to have us then—— To be sure, I forgot one thing. There is that poor invalid, to whom we promised to show the country.'

' Hush !' said Mrs. Harley. ' Not another word about him. Mr. Carew would never speak again to us if he knew who this poor invalid was.'

Had the invalid been a woman, it is possible that Carew might have been curious. As it was merely a man he let

the allusion pass. 'Perhaps,' he said, with a slight accent of consciousness, 'I might get the Burtons to join our party also.'

Mrs. Harley shook her head. 'I'm afraid not,' she said. 'What do you think, George? Elfrida and Mildred have still their little doubts about Mr. Carew.'

'You mean,' said Carew, not wholly without embarrassment—'you mean that I am not a Catholic?'

'Yes, that,' said Mrs. Harley, 'and one or two other little things besides.'

'What?' said Carew. 'Do you mean that ridiculous story which so frightened my Uncle Horace, and which our good friend Stonehouse was kind enough to set him right about?'

'Well, yes,' said Mrs. Harley. 'More or less I mean that. I don't say that Elfrida and Mildred still think you were in love with the lady, but they certainly once did entertain the suspicion: and, poor dear souls, good and amiable as they are, although the suspicion is quite cleared away, it has left a little sediment in their minds of *naïve* unworldly shyness. They are frightened of you, not because you justified the suspicion, but because you suggested it.'

'The real fact is,' said her husband, laughing, 'they think him so good they can't forgive him for not being better; and to them he seems far more immoral, because they compare him with what they wish him to be, than numbers of men far worse, on whom they waste no wishes whatever. But I don't see,' he added, half seriously, 'why, if you were to take charge of her, they shouldn't allow Miss Consuelo to come without them. She, I am sure, would only be too delighted.'

'That,' said Mrs. Harley, 'would be luck indeed for her. Doesn't Consuelo wish she may get it, poor child! Besides, my dear George, we two are in rather bad odour with Elfrida and Mildred ourselves. They will never, I think, get over the shock of having seen that poor man in our rooms. By the way, Mr. Carew, as I warned you

just now, had you been there you would have been horrified just as they were.'

'Who on earth,' said Carew, 'can this mysterious person be? Is it the invalid you spoke of? Is your invalid so very alarming?'

'Tell me, George,' said Mrs. Harley, 'shall we confess it to him? He is sure to find it out for himself, and after all he will perhaps forgive us. Mr. Carew, our invalid is Mr. Foreman.'

'Foreman!' exclaimed Carew, with a genuine start of aversion. 'Do you mean Foreman the agitator? Do you mean the Socialist? Do you mean that lying egotistical scoundrel, half dunce and half madman, who is going about London haranguing the unemployed workmen—poor creatures, whom hunger has made at once savage and credulous—and trying to rouse in them every contemptible quality that can unfit them for any human society—the passions of wild beasts and the hopes of gaping children? Is that really the man you mean?'

'Poor Foreman!' said Harley, with a smile of benign indifference, 'I think society is safe enough as long as we have only him to attack it.'

'I don't know,' Mrs. Harley retorted. 'In times of distress like these, especially on the eve of a general election, a man like that can do an endless amount of mischief. You know, George, don't you, that in a number of constituencies he and his friends are going to run Socialist candidates?'

'And yet,' exclaimed Carew, 'you are a friend of this creature—you countenance him? Good God! I can't understand it! I would as soon be friends with a forger. Besides, what has he, who says that all riches are robbery—what has he to do with a leisurely winter on the Riviera, especially at Nice, that playground of the idle and the profligate?'

'Poor Foreman,' said Mrs. Harley, 'is no doubt mistaken, terribly mistaken, in a great number of ways. But he is entirely unselfish, entirely honest in his opinions——'

‘Begging your pardon,’ interposed Carew, ‘that is just what I say he is not. He may be fool enough to be honest in his Socialistic theories ; but he cannot be honest in the way he denounces classes, who are no more to blame for having been born rich than he is to blame for having been born a biped.’

‘I can tell you,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘he has done one thing, in which we might all of us take a lesson from him. He has made himself familiar with the actual face of poverty. Day by day he has sought out and examined the squalor, the destitution, the hopelessness that exist at our very doors almost. No wonder, when his mind is so full of the thoughts of misery, that he feels indignant at us and at all our luxury. I confess I sympathise with him. Often and often after he has been talking to me, I have felt that every superfluous morsel I ate would choke me. I know he is a visionary about the methods of curing the evil ; but he is certainly no visionary about the evil that wants curing, or about the sullen and restless sense of it that is spreading amongst its victims. Yes, Mr. Carew, you may talk as much as you like about aristocracies, but the great question of the future is the condition of the labouring multitude.’

‘And so,’ said Carew, ‘Mr. Foreman is one of your *other people*, is he?—one of the people who embody the real life of the time?’

‘Yes,’ said Mrs. Harley, again relapsing into a smile. ‘Mr. Foreman is one of my *other people*. You asked just now what he could be doing at Nice. He is here by his doctor’s orders. He is broken with over-work. His chest is affected ; he is suffering from the results of a chill, which he caught when addressing a meeting of dock-labourers. However, Mr. Carew, we won’t inflict him at dinner on you. If I can manage it, you shall have your aristocratic Burtons instead. By the way, it occurs to me now, from something you said this morning, that the hotel where you left your portmanteau, and where I conclude you intend to sleep, is the very hotel where the Burtons themselves are. Here,’

she continued, for the carriage was now stopping—‘here is ours, so you are only a few yards off; and if you don’t mind waiting whilst I write it, I will give you a note for Elfrida, to ask them to come this evening. I shall tell them eight. It is now a little past seven.’

The note in question was soon in Carew’s hand, and he turned towards his own hotel with a pleasant feeling of expectation. When he pushed open the heavy plate-glass doors, the large hall was alive with groups of loiterers; most of them, so it seemed, fresh from the *table d’hôte*, and about to separate in quest of their various dissipation. Taken as a whole, it was not an attractive company. The men looked, to use Cardinal Newman’s phrase, like ‘bad imitations of polished ungodliness,’ whilst the ladies suggested the class which polished ungodliness imitates. What, then, was Carew’s surprise when, amongst a medley of toilettes unmistakably fresh from Paris, he at once caught sight of two singularly plain black dresses, and was aware in an instant that the eldest Miss Burtons were before him! Surprise, however, was not his only emotion. He became conscious of a sudden sense of embarrassment, the causes of which he had not then time to analyse. He felt it impossible to go up to them and give them Mrs. Harley’s note in person; and slipping into the bureau, in order to avoid their notice, he determined to wait until they should go upstairs, intending as soon as they did so to send it up to them by a waiter.

Unseen himself, he had now an excellent view of them: they were, indeed, but a few yards away from him, and he could also see something of what kept them in a scene so incongruous. A middle-aged man, with his back to Carew, was apparently holding them in conversation; but the chilly smile with which they both heard and answered him, and the constant way in which their glances wandered, showed plainly enough that they were waiting for some one else, and that in attending to him at all they were simply the victims of their civility. Carew had no intention of playing the eavesdropper; but the gentleman had a trick of occasionally

raising his voice, and as he did so, reducing the pace of his syllables, which forced what he then said on the ears of every one in his neighbourhood. Nearly every time that this occurred, Carew caught the name of some person of high distinction ; and had he been half asleep in an arm-chair, his impression would have been that somebody was reciting a page out of the ' Peerage.' ' Lady Something did this,' and ' Lord Something did that,' formed apparently the jewels of the speaker's conversation, to which all the rest of it was nothing more than the setting. The Miss Burtons listened with a kind of patient apathy, and seemed to be giving him as little encouragement to continue as one human being could possibly give another ; when a statement he made about a certain well-known duchess at last roused the elder of them into a moment's passing animation.

'What a charming woman that is !' he said. 'I travelled down with her from Paris only a fortnight since.'

'Really !' exclaimed Miss Burton. 'How odd that we didn't see you ; for we were with her ourselves, and we shared a *coupé* between us.'

'Well,' he said, somewhat taken aback, 'I couldn't exactly get a seat in the same train ; but I came by the very next one, and I took charge of her white dog for her. I preferred to wait and get a whole *coupé salon* to myself. But here,' he added, as if glad to change the subject—'here is your servant looking for you. Ah ! he sees you now, I think. *Ici, man—Venez—this way—ici.*'

The servant approached, and Carew could plainly hear him as he spoke.

'Miss Consuelo, ma'am,' he said, 'is with her maid, in Galignani's Library, and she orders me to say that she will be in, in another five minutes.'

'Then send Louise to me,' said Miss Burton, 'and we will dine in half an hour. And, Eugène, go to the office and ask if there are any letters or parcels.'

Both she and her sister immediately turned towards the staircase, and with a slight bow, as they did so, to the

Duchess's late companion, left him staring after them in an attitude of despondent meditation.

An irrepressible smile, meanwhile, had been growing on Carew's lips, for it had dawned on him some moments ago who this fine gentleman was. 'Of course,' he murmured, 'it is Inigo. It can surely be no one else;' and if the smallest doubt had still remained as to the matter it was presently set at rest by Mr. Inigo himself, who strolled into the bureau with an air of solemn abstraction; and finding the clerk absent, and not seeing Carew, instinctively betook himself to the book in which the names of visitors were recorded.

Mr. Inigo was a man who, by long and laborious effort, had lately arrived, in the social world of London, at just enough celebrity for his presence to excite a smile. His origin, thanks to his own diplomatic adroitness, was veiled in profound obscurity. He was content to regard himself, and he hoped he was regarded by others, as having entered the life of fashion by a kind of spontaneous generation.

'I must say,' he muttered aloud to himself, as he stooped down to pour over the book he had opened—'I must say these two ladies have not much manners. And yet, I should like to know, what right have they to be rude? They were not at one—I know it for a fact—not at one of the really smart balls last season. I mean the very, very smart ones.' A moment later he closed the page contemptuously. 'Pooh!' he exclaimed, 'there's nobody that's much good there!' and was turning to walk away when the clerk returned, and with him the Burtons' servant, who was inquiring after his mistress's letters. 'Here is one,' said Carew. 'Will you be kind enough to deliver it at once. It is from Mrs. Harley, and wants an immediate answer.' The moment he spoke he felt that Mr. Inigo's eyes were fixed on him; and when he had finished some directions to the clerk about a bedroom, Mr. Inigo still was there, in readiness to claim his acquaintance. Carew recognised that there was

no chance of escape ; so he submitted to a meeting which he would have gone many yards to avoid.

‘I’d no notion,’ said Mr. Inigo, ‘that you were in these parts. You’ll not stay long—I can venture to predict that.’

‘On the contrary,’ said Carew, ‘I mean to remain till Easter.’

‘Oh,’ said Mr. Inigo, ‘there’s nobody here this winter one ever heard of before ; in fact, till the Darlington came I had hardly a soul to speak to. Lady Darlington, Stonehouse, I, and a few more of us make up a party now and then to the Opera or to Monte Carlo ; but as for me,’ said Mr. Inigo, looking round in the vain hope of an audience, ‘the sole reason why I’m here is that the poor Grand Duke is expected back from Mentone ; and when his cough is bad, I amuse him with my stories in the evening. But, by the way, tell me. A moment ago you mentioned Mrs. Harley. Is she *our* Mrs. Harley—the Mrs. Harley we all know ? And is she in Nice now ?’

‘She is,’ said Carew, drily, ‘and as I am going to dine with her, I fear I must leave you and go upstairs to prepare myself.’

‘Dear me,’ said Mr. Inigo, ‘I must go and call to-morrow. I shall——’ and he wagged his head knowingly—‘I shall get into dreadful hot water if I don’t pay my respects to her. Perhaps,’ he continued as Carew was moving off—‘perhaps, if I came, I should find her at home this evening ?’

‘Certainly,’ said Carew, looking back, ‘she will be in her own rooms ; but her servants will tell you better than I can if she intends to receive company.’

Whilst he spoke he had his foot on the first step of the staircase ; and just as he turned to mount, he became aware that a female figure had passed him. It had moved, it had almost darted, with a noiseless graceful rapidity, something like the flight of a bird, and had nearly, by this time, arrived at the first landing. But Carew’s eyes and mind comprehended the whole vision in an instant. A knot of hair arranged with exquisite neatness ; a hand in a grey glove for

a moment laid on the banister ; a jacket whose fit any of the ladies in the hall might have envied ; but with all this a proud refinement and dignity which seemed to pervade their possessor, and to linger in her wake like a perfume. A second more and she was on the landing. Carew was not far behind her ; her eye, as she turned, inevitably encountered his ; and he saw what he had felt, but what he had not distinctly expressed to himself—that it was Miss Consuelo Burton.

It was more than a year since they had met last ; and when they had parted, it had been with some circumstances of embarrassment. The girl's face and movements betrayed that she was conscious of this. At the first moment of recognition she stopped short suddenly ; a deep colour flushed up into her cheek, and her dark eyes seemed to expand as they fixed on him ; but he had hardly uttered the most commonplace words of greeting, and she replied to them in a manner equally commonplace, when her cheek grew pale again, she smiled quickly and nervously, and saying, in a constrained voice, ' I am in a hurry—my sisters are waiting for me,' with another of her bird-like darts, she was gone before he had time to recover himself.

CHAPTER IV.

A SHADOW FROM THE PAST.

CAREW, as he was dressing, restlessly paced his bedroom, agitated and plunged in reflection. Some eighteen months ago, during part of one London season, he had been by her side at nearly every party ; and whatever might have been his own hopes or intentions, he had taught her eyes to brighten the moment she saw him approaching her. Her sisters, with whom vigilance took the place of acuteness, quickly detected this ; and, for a week or two, they were not displeased at it. They knew that Carew belonged to one of the oldest families in the kingdom ; they understood that

he was the heir to sufficient, if moderate, property ; and they hoped, from the gossip of many of their own circle, that he would be shortly received into the bosom of the Catholic Church. Gossip, however, and their own observations as directed by it, soon added other and very different details about him. There was nothing definitely scandalous in anything they either heard or saw ; but there was much by which, to their minds, scandal was vaguely suggested. They were warned that he was well known for his levity in his conduct to women ; and though by no means willing to believe these warnings justified, they soon saw enough to convince them, as regarded their sister, that she was but one amongst many objects of his similar and habitual attentions.

Finally something happened that was even more serious. During the past year a certain Comtesse de Saint Valery, divorced, it was said, from her husband, who was supposed vaguely to be in St. Petersburg, had been glittering before the eyes of the fashionable world, in that social penumbra by which the fashionable world is surrounded. She was a woman of much education and many accomplishments. She had eyes like a Magdalen and a voice like a sorrowing angel. Numbers of eminent men, it was rumoured, had been in love with her ; and she had saved a child from drowning in the waters of the Lago Maggiore. That incident, which was certainly no mere rumour, had made her acquainted with Carew, who was staying in his cousin's villa at the time. He had indeed himself been present at the scene of the accident, having just arrived in time to render some help with a boat ; and when she appeared in London some months afterwards, he renewed his acquaintance with her—his acquaintance, or rather his friendship. So marked, indeed, did this friendship seem to the small circle which had opportunities of observing it, that a muffled report reached the ears of one of his uncles that he was actually intending to marry this fair foreign adventuress. A family scene ensued, which involved certain unpleasantness ; and

the consequences to Carew might have been really serious if Lord Stonehouse had not, by means of a certain accident, been able to set the mind of the uncle in question at rest. What happened was this. A first cousin of Lord Stonehouse's, and a second cousin of the Burtons'—a man well known in the laxer sets of society—dismayed his relations and excited his friends by eloping with the lady, and carrying her off to the Continent. Till this event, the Miss Burtons had hardly heard of her ; still less did they know that she had any acquaintance with Carew. Nor was this surprising. She had indeed collected round her a little private clique of her own ; she had been constantly attended by a number of well-known men, and caressed by a few ladies who were known but no longer countenanced ; she had been the observed of all observers in the Park, at Sandown, and at Hurlingham ; but she had never once appeared at any recognised ball or party. It was at Hurlingham, indeed, that she and her lover had been dining, with a number of friends, the very night before their elopement ; and of these friends it chanced that Carew was one. He seemed—so rumour was exceedingly careful to add—by no means indifferent to the fair delinquent himself ; and the rest of those present were precisely the kind of people who would pardon her delinquency, even if they did not actually emulate it. It was then that the Miss Burtons heard for the first time Carew's name spoken of in this connection ; and they now heard it so spoken of frequently. This brought their changed opinion of him to a crisis. They were fair enough to recognise that he had not been convicted of anything definitely—not even of trifling with the feelings of their sister ; but they felt that he certainly could not be, what they had at first thought him, a very good man ; and as he consorted with bad men, he might possibly be even a very bad man. Anyhow, as to their sister they came to this conclusion, that from her acquaintance with him she was running a double risk ; that if he were trifling with her she might have a broken heart, or a

husband with a doubtful character and an unavowed religion, if he were serious.

Carew, meanwhile, was perfectly unaware of the way in which his merits were being sifted. It is true that he gradually became conscious that he saw less of Miss Consuelo than formerly, and that her sisters' manner had something stiff and cold in it ; but what the change meant, or that it was really more than his fancy, was not brought home to him till a single incident revealed it. At a brilliant evening party which enlivened the decline of the season he had looked for the Burtons everywhere, but had been unable to find them. At last, when the whole world was going, he came upon them downstairs in a corridor, evidently waiting for their carriage. He offered to call it ; but Miss Burton told him drily that some one else had done so. The some one else—a grey-haired gentleman—reappeared at the same instant, urging them to hurry themselves if they would not lose their opportunity. Still unaware that he had suffered any repulse, Carew offered his arm to Miss Consuelo. She took it ; but presently, when her sisters were a few paces in front of her, looking him straight in the face, and speaking low and rapidly, ' My relations,' she said, ' don't wish me to know you ; and so—for the present—if we meet again, I must ask you not to come up to me or to talk to me.' Then relinquishing his arm, she hastily held her hand out to him, and saying ' Good-bye !' in a voice that had a little quiver in it, in another second she was again close to her sisters.

Carew was so super-sensitive as to his own shortcomings, and, despite his genealogical pride, thought so meanly of his marriageable qualifications, that it was his first impulse to think that he really deserved this treatment ; and he walked home that night with the feelings of a dreaming criminal, conscious of his guilt, and yet unable to recollect the nature of it.

Gradually reflection brought him to a juster condition of mind. He believed himself repulsed because he was mis-

understood ; and he knew the elder Miss Burtons quite well enough to realise that, in their eyes, appearances might easily be against him. But still the uncertainty rankled in his heart ; and a sense of desolation he was not in the least prepared for filled his heart at this sudden and unexplained separation. He felt that for him Miss Consuelo Burton was dead ; and he longed that she would come back to him but for one moment from the grave, to tell him distinctly what had taken her away from him. He might have written and asked her without her sisters' suspecting it ; sometimes he thought of doing so : but the thought, whenever it rose, was instantly checked by a feeling as strong and as strange as the sense of desolation itself. He felt that he would sooner lose her acquaintance for ever than keep it by tempting her to a single clandestine action.

He was not long, however, a passive prey to dejection. By-and-by, as the weeks went on, old cares of a more impersonal nature, which, for some time past, he had forgotten, and had ceased to trouble him, came back again, like returning bailiffs, and again took possession of the chief rooms of his mind. The effect on his thoughts about Miss Consuelo Burton was this. Though not obliterated they were gradually pushed aside ; and in their retirement they quietly and gradually changed themselves. First, though still regretting her, he grew resigned to her loss ; and he ceased to speculate on the chances of any renewal of their intercourse. Then, the facts involved seemed slowly to change their proportions. Whatever the reasons might be which had prejudiced her guardians against him, they probably, after all, might not be so very serious ; and finally an impression grew upon him, though it was not untroubled with diffidence, that should he and the Burtons be ever again thrown together, he would find himself sufficiently white-washed in the eyes of his late censors, perhaps by their better judgment, perhaps even by their forgetfulness.

The strength of this impression had been now just put to the test ; and the sense of shyness which he had been

unable to conceal from himself at once convinced him that it was not quite so strong as he had thought it was. One thing, however, he found was stronger, and that was the attraction which Miss Consuelo Burton had for him. He had come to wonder at times whether the place she held in his heart were not less due to herself than to his own regretful imagination; and he was startled to realise, in their late momentary meeting, not only that her charm was an actual and undeniable fact, but that it was—as far as he could judge—even greater now than formerly.

Pondering these matters as he went through the process of dressing, he became aware that, without having thought why, he was doing his best to make himself as late as possible. His watch told him that it was nearly dinner-time; but he was still lingering over his shirt-studs and his neck-tie. Why was he doing so? He at last put the question to himself; and his heart at once made him a very complete confession. He distrusted his position with the elder Miss Burtons, regarded merely in the light of common acquaintances; but his main reason for avoiding them had been the far more practical fear that they might suspect he would be dining with Mrs. Harley, and might decline her invitation in consequence. As it was, he never doubted that they would accept it; and he was anxious, he discovered, that they should precede him by some minutes, in order that when he arrived he should find them prepared to meet him. He felt sure that at first the elder ones would feel some displeasure at the prospect; he felt sure, also, that Mrs. Harley would notice this. He counted, then, on having his character rapidly canvassed; on Mrs. Harley putting it in the most favourable and friendly light; on the elder Miss Burtons feeling that perhaps they had judged him wrongly; and on entering the room himself, if not restored to their favour, at least with a chance of winning his way back to it.

These reflections very likely evinced no very great subtlety; but they were better than subtle, for they happened

to be substantially true. The Miss Burtons arrived at Mrs. Harley's before Carew. The news that he was coming embarrassed the younger, and caused a shock of surprised annoyance to the elder.

'We used to meet,' said Miss Elfrida drily, 'but we have seen nothing at all of him now for a very long time.'

'Last season,' said Mrs. Harley, 'he was hardly ever in London.'

'Really,' said Miss Elfrida, 'I have not followed his movements. But I'm surprised that so gay a gentleman could tear himself away from his dissipations.'

'He stayed in the country,' said Mrs. Harley, 'for his mother's sake, who is an old lady. There was nothing to be alarmed at in her condition, except the natural weakness of age; but he fancied he detected a wish in her that he should not leave her that summer, and, however he might like his dissipations, he did, you see, tear himself away from them.'

'Really,' said Miss Burton, in a tone that was somewhat softened, 'I should never have thought that of him.' And she looked down gently, as if lost in reflection. Her host, however, would not leave her in silence.

'I always thought,' she said, 'that there was nothing, in your opinion, too good for Mr. Carew to have done—Mr. Carew, who is so great a friend of your Cardinal's. Surely you must admire the man who, though merely a wretched heretic, is yet asked by the Cardinal to breakfast three times in a fortnight.'

Miss Burton's look and manner grew, for an instant, cold again.

'I'm afraid,' she said, '*that* acquaintance is a thing of the past now. There are other friends Mr. Carew has found more congenial.'

'Well,' interposed Mrs. Harley, 'we shall see what he finds *us*; for, my dear Elfrida, he is outside the door this moment.'

Had she said 'inside,' she would, perhaps, have been more accurate, for the servant had announced him almost

before she had done speaking. On first entering, it was evident that he was somewhat shy. This, however, did him no disservice. For, as in his boldness there was nothing impertinent, so in his shyness there was something graceful and dignified. The reserved courtesy with which he greeted the elder Miss Burtons, and which, though reserved, was perfectly unresentful, pleaded at once for him with their generous and delicate instincts; nor was the impression altered when they saw at a single glance the slightly different manner in which he approached their sister. In his short greeting nothing of his demeanour was lost on them; and they realised, by a process more rapid than conscious reasoning, that if he met *them* with reserve he was meeting *her* with reverence. Carew himself, by a somewhat similar process, realised, for his part, what was passing in their minds about him; and though he did not flatter himself that he was not still looked askance at, he felt as if at least he were to be granted a new trial.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPHINX OF THE MODERN WORLD.

HE found at dinner that every circumstance favoured him. The elder Miss Burtons, however they might differ from him on some points, agreed with him at least on one—his attachment to anything which suggested the præ-popular epoch; and when Mrs. Harley began about the old town amongst the mountains, their usual cheerful gravity was at once roused to interest. Their faces brightened, and they asked enthusiastic questions. Carew, at first, was content to say very little; and he merely answered Mrs. Harley about some facts as to which she appealed to him. Presently, however, seeing that he was treated as an authority, the Miss Burtons began to look at him when he spoke, and both by their words and eyes to put their questions to him for themselves. As for their sister, her feelings were less

evident. She hardly opened her lips ; she listened to Carew with intentness, and whenever his face was averted her eyes were gravely fixed on him. But the interest he excited in her seemed to be hardly due so much to what he said, as to the fact that he was saying it.

From the old town the conversation, by easy steps, wanderéd away to other antiquities of the neighbourhood, to similar towns, to old villas and châteaux, and at last to the château which Carew was himself inhabiting. This at once seemed to captivate the eldest Miss Burton's imagination, and now for the first time Carew and she found themselves beginning a direct conversation with each other.

'It's a place,' said Carew, 'as I was telling Mrs. Harley, where one fancies, except for a distant glimpse of the railway, that one is actually living before the French Revolution. Do you know the feeling, after having been long separated from some one, and having almost come to think you would never see them again, of once again feeling yourself all alone with them—securely and in peace, face to face, and heart to heart? I have just the same feeling when living at Courbon-Loubet. Imagine the delight, as you look on the wide landscape, of knowing that you are in an Eden where there are no political meetings, and where a creature like Mr. Snapper is as unknown as a zebra !'

Mr. Japhet Snapper was an opulent Member of Parliament, who at that time was pushing himself fast into notice, and struggling to be recognised as a leader of the Radical party. The moment his name was mentioned a rapid look of disgust passed over the faces of both the elder Miss Burtons. It seemed to affect them as if it were some disagreeable smell.

'That man !' exclaimed Miss Mildred. 'One can hardly bear to think of him.'

Mrs. Harley, however, was by no means of this opinion. 'I'm afraid,' she said, laughing, 'that you and I and all of us shall be obliged to think of him soon. Mr. Snapper, Mildred, is the future Prime Minister of England.'

‘Never!’ said Miss Elfrida, with a quiet but contemptuous gravity. ‘We have sunk low enough, but we have hardly come yet to that. Fancy a man who, in public, lives by denouncing gentlemen, and in private does nothing but vainly struggle to imitate them!’

‘I,’ said Mrs. Harley, with her eyes gleaming mischievously, ‘find Mr. Snapper charming. So would you, Elfrida, if you would only consent to meet him. What fun it would be to see him taking you down to dinner! George, next season we *must* manage that, mustn’t we?’

‘I think,’ interposed Miss Mildred, ‘that we know him better than you do. Part of Consuelo’s little property is in the town where he makes his money; so we have had some opportunity of looking behind the scenes and learning the way in which he behaves to those dependent on him. I can only say that to me it is incomprehensible how a man who is as brutal to them as he is in private can have the face to pretend in public that he is their friend and champion.’

‘Of course,’ said Miss Elfrida, ‘the man is not a gentleman.’

‘You speak,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘as if a man’s not being a gentleman explained every sin, and at the same time excused none.’

‘So it does,’ said Carew, ‘with sins of a certain kind. It does so with the sins of selfish schemers in politics. There are certain forms of political dishonesty which are possible only to people of Snapper’s kind. A gentleman could not commit them, let him be as scheming and as selfish as you please, because a gentleman lacks the sense by which the temptation to commit them is appreciated. A gentleman may forget the people, or offer them stones for bread. It is only men like Snapper who will attempt to coax them with poison.’

Here, for the first time during dinner, Miss Consuelo looked straight at Carew, and said, a little abruptly, ‘What do you mean by poison?’

‘I mean,’ said Carew, ‘the poison of hopes which he knows can never be realised, and of anger at conditions of life which he knows can never be altered.’

‘Come, come,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘I really must stick up for my friends. I don’t know why you should assume that Mr. Snapper is dishonest. My own belief is that, as regards the poor, he does genuinely feel what he says, and that he is genuinely anxious to remove or to lessen their troubles. For, my dear Elfrida, the poor *have* troubles. Even you and Mr. Carew, I think, must admit that.’

‘They have,’ said Miss Elfrida ; ‘no one knows it better than I do. They have many. But if you look at the few which Mr. Snapper chooses to harangue about, you will find that he chooses them for an exceedingly obvious reason—not because they are those most distressing to the poor, but because he can manage most easily to lay them to the charge of the rich.’

‘You forget,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘he is a very rich man himself. He has, I can assure you, no objection to riches.’

‘I believe you there,’ Miss Elfrida retorted. ‘I should have said gentlemen, the upper classes, the aristocracy. He hates them far more than he loves the poor. Come, my dear Evelyn, even you can’t deny his bitterness.’

‘Yes,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘he *is* bitter—no doubt he is ; and I confess that I don’t wonder at it. After all, he is only human. My dear Elfrida, if you had seen him, as I have done, biting his lip at dinner, and wincing at the way in which he was—well, treated by some people as if he were one of the footmen——’

‘My dear Evelyn,’ interposed Miss Mildred, with a little good-natured gurgle, ‘and what does the man want? One human being, he says, is just as good as another. Why should he wish to be treated better than footmen are? No, no ; I’ve positively no patience with him. As you yourself admit, he thinks lords and ladies such wonderful people, that he is mad with wretchedness if they don’t civilly notice him ; and then, to revenge himself, he goes and shrieks in

his speeches that they are so silly and wicked, that they ought to be noticed by nobody. Besides,' she went on, 'in spite of his denunciations of landlords, he has, I am told, been thinking of setting up as a squire himself, and has been looking about for an estate with a fine park belonging to it. I hear from our agent that he has his eye upon several in the West of England—in your part of the world, Mr. Carew.'

'I assure you, Evelyn,' said Miss Elfrida, with a more subdued intonation, 'Mildred is quite right in all she says. She is an excellent woman of business, and knows thoroughly well what she is talking about.'

'Will nobody,' Miss Mildred continued—'will nobody show him up? Will none of the people themselves lift a voice against him? There would be no need whatever to abuse the man. Nothing would be wanted but simply to state facts. I wonder that this is not done by the *gentlemen* of even his own party.'

'I don't care,' said Miss Elfrida, 'who it is who exposes him—gentleman or no gentleman. Indeed, I have often thought that a man who was not a gentleman could do it better than a man who was. If one of us were to attack him, it might seem that we did so in our own interests. If some one else did it, every one could see that it was done in the interests of sincerity.'

'My dear Elfrida,' said Mrs. Harley, 'and you too, Mildred, I am in great doubt whether I shall tell you something or whether I shall not tell you. I am considering how you would both take it.'

'Tell us,' said both of them, with a smile of almost childish curiosity.

'Well,' said Mrs. Harley, 'if I do, you must not be horrified. Do you remember a certain man—a poor invalided creature—whom you were shocked the other day to meet here, calling upon me?'

'What!' exclaimed Miss Elfrida, 'do you mean that dreadful Mr. Foreman? I can promise you, my dear Evelyn,

I shall never get over that. Why, he is ten times worse than Mr. Snapper himself. Mr. Snapper would only pick the landlord's pockets. This man would murder every one who has a decent coat on his back. Mr. Snapper, too, whatever he believes or disbelieves, never openly insults the Church ; but this man is an avowed Atheist, who utters his blasphemies in the parks and the public streets. He even ridicules marriage, and advocates everything that is horrible. I only speak from what you yourself have told me.'

'And now,' said Mrs. Harley, 'I am going to tell you something more. You were wishing for somebody to denounce and to expose Mr. Snapper. In Mr. Foreman you have the very thing you were wishing for.'

'Mr. Foreman !' exclaimed Miss Elfrida. 'He denounce Mr. Snapper ! He is far more likely to egg him on than denounce him. They are both of the same party, only one is more extreme than the other. A Socialist hates the upper classes even more than a Radical does.'

'No,' said Carew, 'I think you are wrong there. What a Socialist hates is the middle classes. No doubt he thinks landlords very bad indeed ; but he thinks them good when compared with a Radical manufacturer, and if he seems to agree with the Radical in so far as he thinks them bad, the two come to this conclusion for exactly opposite reasons. The Radical hates landlords because he thinks they differ from tradesmen ; the Socialist hates them because he thinks they resemble tradesmen.'

'You see, Elfrida,' said Mrs. Harley, 'you and Mr. Foreman will agree on this point to perfection. Come, tell me : are you prepared to meet him ?'

Miss Elfrida and Miss Mildred had, both of them, till now been listening with a patient, if somewhat puzzled, attention ; but at this last question, put, so it seemed, quite seriously, their faces assumed a look of surprised reproach, and they drew themselves up with the slightest indication of hauteur. Mrs. Harley, however, went on placidly with her suggestion.

‘If you like it,’ she added, ‘I will ask him to come in after dinner. He is staying in the hotel.’

Had Mr. Foreman been the plague or the cholera personified, the two elder Miss Burtons could hardly have started more.

‘In this hotel!’ they gasped, as soon as they had recovered their voices. ‘I hope and trust, Evelyn, you will not ask him to do anything of the kind.’

‘I,’ said Carew, ‘quite agree with the Miss Burtons. I have no wish to meet one scoundrel simply because he exposes another. All the same, I believe Foreman to be far more honest than Mr. Snapper.’

‘If,’ said Miss Elfrida, having apparently reflected a little, ‘he were not so horrid in other things than his politics, I might perhaps bring myself to see him, and to talk to him. We might—who knows?—make him useful, and perhaps put him right in some ways. But a complete unbeliever—a man who insults the name of Almighty God in public, and who glories in despising every rule of morality——’

Miss Elfrida stopped. Her feelings were too strong for utterance.

‘Of course,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘that side of him is very shocking; but you are quite wrong—you think that he has no morals at all. On the contrary, he has a code of the strictest and most difficult kind; and the first law in it is the law of justice with regard to property, and the material means of living a decent life. Without such justice he thinks every other virtue is a mockery; and justice with him means not only talk about the poor, but it means exceedingly real and exceedingly rude self-sacrifice for them.’

‘I think,’ said Miss Elfrida, ‘the Church could have taught him this without his taking the trouble to think it out for himself. The Church has taught charity to the poor for some eighteen hundred years: and Mr. Foreman’s charity ends with their bodies—for you cannot imagine that he has any care for their souls.’

‘What Mr. Foreman thinks,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘is this.

He thinks that so long as their bodies are treated as they at present are, to work for their souls is a hopeless, is even a ridiculous task. How, he asks, shall they be pure and temperate, how shall they have any of the virtues which good Christians prize, so long as they are housed like pigs and fed worse than pigs—so long as they have no knowledge, and no leisure, and nothing from their childhood that so much as suggests happiness, except drink, and things worse than drink? How shall we tell them to be clean when they have only sewage to wash in?’

‘Surely,’ said Miss Mildred, ‘it is the mission of the Church to bring them water. Its first message is to those in want and misery; its chief work lies among them. It enjoins the rich to relieve wretchedness, and it helps the wretched to bear it.’

‘Think,’ Miss Elfrida added, ‘of the monastic orders. In some the work is harder than that of any labourer; in others the food is coarser and more meagre. In this way they are perpetually teaching the poor that there is nothing necessarily degrading either in constant toil or in privation.’

‘Yes,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘but the hushed asceticism of the monastery or of the convent is a very different thing from the brutal starvation of the streets. Mr. Foreman’s ideal of duty differs from yours in this. You look on poverty as a thing that must be endured or at best palliated; he looks on it as a thing that must be utterly done away with. Your notion is that the rich ought to help the poor. His notion is that there should be no poor to help. Please don’t think that I agree with him in all his views; still less do I think him right in the ways he takes to disseminate them. But I want to show you that he is something quite different from what you imagine him—a cross between a libertine and a criminal lunatic. Whatever may be your opinions of Mr. Snapper’s zeal for the poor, Mr. Foreman is perfectly genuine. You, George, though you don’t think much of him, will at least answer for that.’

‘Yes,’ said Harley, in a genial tone of amusement, ‘he

is a genuine zealot ; no one can doubt that who knows him ; and if you compare him with Snapper, there is something almost grotesque in the contrast. What is genuine in Snapper is his hatred of the aristocracy ; what is genuine in Foreman is his feeling for the labouring classes. Foreman only denounces the rich as a means of rousing the poor ; Snapper only rouses the poor as a means of attacking a certain section of the rich.'

During all this conversation Miss Consuelo had remained silent ; but though silent she had been not inattentive. On the contrary, her attention had been increasing. She looked first at one speaker, then at another, in particular at Mrs. Harley ; and seemed several times to have been on the point of asking a question, if the presence of her sisters had not for some reason embarrassed her. At last she began, just as the ladies were rising, ' I have heard the Cardinal speak about Mr. Foreman——'

' My dear Consuelo,' exclaimed Miss Mildred, ' what can the Cardinal have possibly said about Mr. Foreman to you ?'

' He was not talking to me—he was talking to some one else ; and there was much about Mr. Foreman with which he said he sympathised.'

' My dear child,' said Miss Mildred, ' you must have misunderstood the Cardinal.'

' Indeed,' said Carew, ' I venture to think not. The day before I left England, I spent an entire evening with him, and he happened to say the very same thing to me. Of Foreman, personally, he knows nothing, nor of the infamous falsehoods employed by him to further his cause ; else I am sure his opinion would be very much modified. He did know, however, that Foreman was a complete atheist ; and yet, in spite of that, he distinctly told me of him, that there was much in his social views, and much in his efforts to spread them, with which, as a Catholic, he himself agreed.'

The effect of this speech on the elder Miss Burtons was considerable. It did not, indeed, seem to alter their views

about Mr. Foreman; for Miss Elfrida merely remarked quietly, 'We all know that the Cardinal's a bit of a Radical.' But the fact that the Cardinal was still intimate with Carew worked wonders for the latter in restoring him to their good opinion; and in the way they looked at him, as he held the door open for them, there was a returning gleam of their original frank friendliness. Miss Consuelo, too, as she passed, for a moment raised her eyes to him.

CHAPTER VI.

A CHILD OF THE OLD ORDER.

WHEN the two gentlemen rejoined the rest of their party, the first sound that greeted Carew's ears was his own name being uttered by Mrs. Harley.

'Did you hear us,' she said, 'taking your name in vain? We were not abusing you much, so you need not discompose yourself. We have been talking again about the wonders of Courbon-Loubet; and I have been telling the Miss Burtons the reasons why you like it. You like it, I was saying, for just the same reasons that the ostrich likes to hide his head in the sand. You lose sight there of the progress of the sacred democracy, and you think, accordingly, that the democracy has ceased progressing.'

Carew chanced at the moment to be standing close to Miss Consuelo.

'Perhaps,' she said to him, speaking low and quickly, 'you think, also, that the poor have ceased suffering?'

There was a vacant chair beside her, and he sat down on it. Diffident, however, of even seeming to engross her, he hardly did more than glance at her; and with a laugh of forced indifference he addressed himself to the party generally.

'If we were inclined to forget democratic progress,' he said, 'some of us here, before dinner, had an excellent reminder of its reality, in the presence of—come, Mrs.

Harley, whom do you think?—a most eminent man, and a very dear friend of yours.'

'Of mine!' said Mrs. Harley. 'Do you mean Mr. ****?' and she named a distinguished statesman. 'He, I know, is expected here.'

'No,' said Carew; 'I mean—I mean—guess once more! —Mr. Inigo.'

The elder Miss Burtons broke into a hearty laugh.

'What?' they exclaimed. 'And have you seen him too?'

'That man!' said Mrs. Harley. 'You don't mean to say that he's here! He is no friend of mine. I have never allowed him to be introduced to me.'

'In that case,' said Carew, 'he must be in a very forlorn condition; for he assured me just now that you were the best friend he possessed.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Harley, 'now I come to think of it, I believe that one night he did see me to my carriage—yes, and ever since he has been constantly leaving cards on me.'

'My dear Evelyn,' said Miss Elfrida, 'I can tell you he's a very grand gentleman. Mildred and I felt quite frumps by comparison.' And she began a description of their encounter with Mr. Inigo in the hall.

Carew now turned to Miss Consuelo; and, for the first time addressing himself to her exclusively, 'You have never,' he asked, 'met Mr. Foreman, have you?'

'No,' she said; 'but I am not like you, and I think I should like to do so. I often feel about the poor—often, perhaps always—just, as I gather, he feels. I could never forget them because I saw none of them suffering near me.'

'Neither do I,' said Carew gravely. 'If you go merely by what I have just been saying, you will be doing me the greatest injustice—much more than you think. But I do agree with your sisters, that you, with a religion like yours, may find all the assistance and sympathy you can ever require in *it*, without going to a soured and unscrupulous enthusiast like Foreman.'

'If you,' said Miss Consuelo, 'had been brought up as

I have been, you would not perhaps think my religion so sufficient as you do now. And yet, no !' she exclaimed, ' why have I said that ? It is not what I mean. I don't know how to express myself. Of course the Church possesses all the teaching and all the sympathy you speak of somewhere—but where ? No, I can't go on ; you would not be able to understand me.'

' Try,' said Carew, ' and see. I think I should.'

There was a pause of a moment or two, and then she broke out abruptly, ' Look at my two sisters. They are far better people than I am. The aim of their lives is to be and to do good ; and yet I always feel them to be aiming wide of the mark. They are constantly thinking of the poor, and, as they imagine, working for the poor ; but—well, to me it all seems like weeding a flower-garden instead of ploughing a field. Mildred, whilst I am under age, manages my affairs for me. She is practical and business-like enough, and has done much to improve some bad cottages and houses. Still, to hear her talk, one would think that bad cottages and houses were sent into the world that we might do ourselves good by improving them ; and, as for Elfrida, she is far more pleased at seeing two hundred people in one chapel than she is pained at seeing twenty families in one house. Sometimes, when I watch her trotting off to Mass in the morning, looking as if she were doing the whole duty of woman, I feel as if, myself, I should never be religious again.'

She spoke low, but with strong and evident feeling. There was a flush in her cheeks ; her eyes were fixed on her lap, and she was trifling nervously with the crimson feathers of her fan.

' You know,' she went on presently, with the rapid frankness that sometimes springs from shyness — ' you know how my sisters keep guard over me—over the parties I go to, over the men I dance with or speak to. You know that, Mr. Carew, don't you ? No one knows it better than you do.'

‘Yes,’ said Carew ; ‘no one better than I.’

‘What care,’ she resumed, ‘they think necessary to keep me from doing something dreadful ! Perhaps they are right,’ and she gave a slight ironical laugh. ‘But if we, in our class, can be so easily demoralised by our surroundings, if goodness is a flower that must be so very carefully nursed, what must be the case with the great majority of our poor ? I think I am a standing proof that wickedness must be the fruit of circumstances, and that men like Mr. Foreman are the only men who are right when they tell us we must begin by attacking the circumstances first.’

Carew raised his eyes, and saw that the eldest Miss Burton was watching him. Having observed this, he instinctively raised his voice, and addressed his answer to the company in general rather than to Miss Consuelo.

‘My quarrel with Foreman,’ he said, ‘is not that he wishes to alleviate misery, but that, as a matter of fact, he adds to it. As a preliminary to satisfying the natural wants of the poor, he thinks he must madden them with wants that are exotic and unnatural. To the pangs of poverty he must add the pangs of envy ; and this you may take for granted—if poverty is the parent of some sins, envy is the parent of more ; and the wants of poverty can be appeased, but the wants of envy are insatiable. Poverty is the thirst of a man on earth ; envy is the thirst of a man in hell.’

‘My dear Mr. Carew,’ Mrs. Harley here interposed, ‘do you think for one instant that, were there no Mr. Foreman in existence, the people could possibly rest content in the state in which they are now ? Do you think that sooner or later they will not insist on a change ?’

‘They have taken,’ said Carew, ‘a good many thousand years to think about it ; and they are no worse off now than they have been in other ages. Suffering and want there have always been in the world. No one can deplore this more than I do ; but to exaggerate the fact is even more mischievous than to neglect it. Multitudes of the poor, so far as happiness goes, enjoy practically as good a chance as

the rich, until the agitator comes like the harpy, to ruin their simple banquet.'

'It's all very well,' retorted Mrs. Harley, 'for us to sit still and say misery has always existed, and the people have always borne it; but in the first place, we must remember that by this time we have educated them. We have made their skins tender and sensitive, and they are now maddened by things which they hardly felt before.'

'I admit,' said Carew drily, 'that education, as the Radicals conceive it, is a crueller engine of torture than was ever dreamed of by Nero.'

'Oh, but,' said Mrs. Harley, her manner growing more and more earnest, 'the hardest and cruellest evils are those which, unhappily, it needs no education to point out to us; and these, in our great cities at least, certainly are increasing. Think of these terrible periods, which people now call crises, when men by thousands, with wives and children dependent on them—strong men, men willing to work—rise up in the morning without any certainty at all that they will be able to earn so much as a crust of bread by the evening.'

'Yes,' said Carew; 'but be fair as well as compassionate. There are crises now; in old days there were famines.'

'Think,' Mrs. Harley went on, 'of the mothers who see their children dying simply for the want of a breath of wholesome air; and they know all the while what wealth is being wasted round them. It *is* a hard life, and it *is* a bitter life. It is hard enough when trade is good; but when trade is depressed, as it is now, no one can conceive it who has not looked close at it.'

'Things,' said Carew, 'have been often as bad before.'

'It seems,' said Mrs. Harley, 'that the people themselves don't think so. Anyhow, even if their burdens have not increased, what has increased is their own impatience of bearing them. Have you ever looked into the faces of an East End mob? Have you ever realised what an appalling sight they are? The French Ambassador has several

times said to me that he thinks things in England in a most critical and dangerous condition, and that the savage and sullen spirit fermenting throughout the country now is just what there was in Paris before the Great Revolution. And at this moment, to add to it, there is all the wild excitement of a general election, which will largely be managed by agitators. Nothing would surprise me less, if we have hard weather this spring, and the misery of cold is added to the misery of hunger, than to hear of serious troubles and outbreaks in London, and elsewhere also. Did you read the accounts of what was said and what happened at Foreman's street meetings some two months ago? He is going to repeat them as soon as ever he can get home again.'

Mrs. Harley was here interrupted by a loud rap at the door. Throughout the room there was a startled sense of expectation, broken only by Mrs. Harley's faint 'Come in.' Then the door was thrown open wide by a waiter, and there, framed in the doorway, was the figure of Mr. Inigo. One of those sudden silences fell on the whole party which, so far as their meaning goes, are a kind of congealed laugh, and which fill a room with an atmosphere of slightly displeased surprise. This, however, gave Mr. Inigo no distress whatever. It seemed, on the contrary, to be his native element, and he entered it as naturally as a duck takes to the water. The punctilious but blank politeness of Mr. and Mrs. Harley, and the slight bows of the Miss Burtons, did nothing to disturb his usual solemn smile and his odd composite air of determined yet apologetic assurance. Indeed, in little more than a minute he was sipping a cup of coffee; and, unconscious of having silenced one conversation by his entrance, to make up for it he was already leading another. Oddly enough, too, he commanded an attentive hearing.

'I confess,' he said to Mrs. Harley, 'considering all the things that probably will be happening at home, I am surprised at your spending the whole winter abroad. I shall be back in London by the week after next, at farthest.

And you, Miss Burton—do you mean to tell me actually that you will be away also?’

Mr. Inigo’s voice grew very grave and impressive. ‘I think it’s a pity,’ he said. ‘We may expect many things to be happening soon in London—several of them very important—which will practically change the whole aspect of society. Nobody ought to miss them.’

If Mr. Inigo had startled his hearers at first, he startled them now still more. They were filled with a double wonder—first at his train of thought being so nearly the same as their own, and secondly at his being capable of such a train of thought at all. ‘And pray how,’ said Mrs. Harley, with an odd puzzled expression—‘pray how, Mr. Inigo, do you get this gift of prophecy?’

Mr. Inigo eyed the company one by one, the light of suppressed knowledge sparkling in each pupil; and at last he gave utterance to this astonishing answer. ‘Ah,’ he said—‘ah—a little bird has told me.’

If he liked attention, he certainly had it now, for every one stared blankly at him.

‘You certainly,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘take the matter very philosophically.’

‘Oh,’ said Mr. Inigo, ‘as for me, I shall be back in a fortnight, so I shall come in for everything, and nothing will have begun before then. It will be three weeks, in fact, before the real movement is perceptible; not that even now there are not premonitory symptoms. For instance,’ he continued, ‘take my own case. The week after next I have three dinners in London already, and I think probably a funeral—poor Lord Bayham’s. A very smart—I mean to say, a very sad affair that will be. Every one about the Court will of course have to be there. Gull, I am told, gives him only ten days more. It’s very sad. He was a dear, dear friend of mine. He used to ask me to luncheon three times every season. However,’ Mr. Inigo continued, suppressing an elaborate sigh, ‘what I was going to tell you is this. The week after, the little bird I spoke of has told

me that there will be a fancy ball in a house we all know of at one corner of Grosvenor Square ; and another, two days later—I am not at liberty to say where ; and in all probability there will be three Royalties at it. Now these are specimens, but they are specimens only, of all the things we may very soon be expecting. Why, there's been nothing like it, out of June and July, before.'

Mr. Inigo's news was received in discreet silence, which seemed to him to argue absorbed attention ; and presently turning from the social future in England, he proceeded to discuss the social present on the Riviera. He gave a brief analysis of the Visitors' List at Cannes, from which it appeared that, of the villas let for the winter, two only had been taken by English peers. 'In fact,' he concluded, 'the whole place is going to the dogs.' Then, like a bird winging its way back to its young ones, he returned to the subject of his own engagements in London ; and he might have gone on for some indefinite time discussing them, if it had not been for an accidental remark of Carew's.

A pause occurring in Mr. Inigo's list of gaieties, Carew said, with a smile : 'I suppose you never honour with your company Mr. Foreman's *al fresco* entertainments?'

It was an unambitious joke, and the company received it as such—all except Mr. Inigo. He certainly had not a reputation for being sensitive ; but for some unaccountable reason this piece of banter seemed to offend and stagger him. He stared at Carew in silence, the smile died from his lips, and at last he said, 'I beg your pardon,' in a manner which, had he ever ventured to let his words go out of a walk, would have plainly expressed a mixture of surprise, suspicion, and ferocity. Mrs. Harley concluded that he thought he was being laughed at ; and, though not in her heart at all sorry that he should think so, she civilly tried to set matters right again. 'We have been talking,' she explained, 'about socialism in the East End, and Mr. Foreman's street meetings. But that, I suppose, has very little interest for you.'

Mr. Inigo saw that she wished to please him. His smile, like a sun through clouds, made fitful struggles to shine out again. But his spirits flagged; his air of triumph was gone; he was no longer jubilant in the memory of having had twelve invitations for a single night last season; and before long he rose and took his departure. 'I must go,' he said, nerving himself to retire with honour, 'and see if a telegram has come for me from the Grand Duke about to-morrow. Poor old boy, I'm afraid he's getting very shaky.'

He closed the door, and descended the stairs slowly. There were no listeners, but had there been any, and had their ears been sharp enough, they might have overheard him muttering, in a tone of anger and perplexity, 'I wonder if that fellow Carew could have meant any impertinence by that which he said just now. Let me catch him spreading any absurd stories about me, and I little know myself if I am not even with him some day!'

The Miss Burtons presently rose to depart also, and they accepted with a very good grace, and without any air of distance, Carew's natural offer to see them back to their hotel. He told the Harleys, as he said good-night to them, that he would call the following morning, before he went back to the château, to know on what day he might expect them to come to him; and he even ventured, during his short walk with the Miss Burtons, on a diffident suggestion that they too should drive over and lunch there. Miss Elfrida's answer, however, though good-natured, was not altogether encouraging.

'Thank you,' she said, with a little nervous laugh. 'The expedition would, I am sure, be most interesting.' But she immediately added that they were leaving Nice soon, and that, for the next few days, their time was already occupied. This statement brought them to the portico of the hotel; and as she at once followed it by an abrupt though friendly good-night, Carew felt that even yet he was but half restored to their confidence. The next instant, however, there was some compensation for him; and this was the glance that

Miss Consuelo gave him as she and her sisters were disappearing through the folding-doors. Carew did not follow them. He felt no inclination as yet to retire to rest, and he remained meditating outside in the moonlight.

CHAPTER VII.

SIBYL AND SIREN.

THE hotel was one which opened on the *Promenade des Anglais* ; and before Carew's eyes, as he stood silent and solitary, there rose and fell the mysterious flash of the Mediterranean. In his state of mind at the moment, the sight had a special charm for him. The air, too, was warm as the air of a summer evening ; and far and faint, from an undistinguishable quarter, there came to his ears for an instant a vague sound of music, floating and dying away like a wandering scent of flowers. He looked at his watch. It was far earlier than he had thought it was. It was only half-past ten. He lighted a cigarette ; and, obeying some restless impulse, he crossed the road to the side nearest the sea.

He stood for some moments, leaning on his stick, and taking the scene in. The moon was shining brilliantly, and right away from him, following the long curve of the coast, the broad esplanade, with its fringe of gas-lamps, seemed to stretch itself out into the heart of some unknown solitude. On one side of it was the sea, on the other its succession of houses, blanched like a row of lilies—lodging-houses, villas, hotels, and, conspicuous at a certain distance, the lighted blinds and windows of the great *Cercle de la Méditerranée*. In those windows there was a certain strange suggestiveness. They gave to the moonlight a sense of passion and recklessness, which was presently added to by the bells of a smart-looking Russian carriage, as it rattled by, with two men in sables in it, and left in its wake a faint smell of cigarette-smoke. Meanwhile, far off on the horizon the lighthouse of the Cap d'Antibes was shining with its steadfast eye ;

and near at hand some vessels were lying black in the moon-track, whose coloured lights, as they moved almost imperceptibly, gleamed like rubies and emeralds, floating on the breast of the pale waters.

The hour and the scene were full of hints and whisperings, as various as the thoughts by which Carew was already agitated ; and his mind began to work as if under some new stimulus. He was conscious of a sense not of happiness but of exaltation. He was not happy ; on the contrary, he was perplexed and anxious : but all his feelings and perceptions, whether of trouble or of pleasure, seemed to him to be quickened, and, somehow, to move to music. This was the case even with his sense of the ridiculous, as he almost directly realised ; for in another moment, on the opposite side of the road, he caught sight of the figure of Mr. Inigo posting off in the direction of the *Cercle*, and intent, as Carew divined, on finding some fashionable acquaintance, open to being victimised into what might be called a friend. Carew began moving in the same direction also, with no other purpose than to prolong the grotesque amusement he was aware of in watching the other. Having, however, been once set walking, it was not long before he quickened his pace, and was soon lost in thoughts with which Mr. Inigo had but little connection.

At first they were far from pleasing. He knew that he had carried away from Mrs. Harley's some secret discontent with himself. Now this discontent began to disclose its nature. The part he had taken in the evening's conversation came back to him ; and certain of his sentences, like accusing spirits, began to say themselves over and over again to him. They were not sentences that he had uttered to Miss Consuelo Burton. They had nothing to do directly either with her or her sisters ; though with her, no doubt, indirectly they had to do. What they referred to was the poor in the modern world—the great industrial masses ; and the claims and struggles which Mrs. Harley said would be made by them.

‘And I,’ he began murmuring, ‘have done nothing but meet these claims with a sneer. I set them aside this evening with a bitter and contemptuous flippancy, as if they were nothing but the cant of a sect, or of some scheming radical faction. And all the while I myself believe in them, with a belief that is always at my heart like a dull physical pain. For the past two years what have I thought of else? All the future is contained in them—in these hopes and claims of the people—the duties, the hopes, the fears, the whole life of the world. And we’—his reflections here grew less distinct again—‘and we, what will be our part? Is our world—the world of us who are made of different clay from the others, of us who inherit all the traditions of centuries—is that world to dissolve like a dream, and leave no trace behind it? Or shall we find that still we have a place amongst the leaders left to us?’

Presently, into thoughts like these a new image intruded itself, and this was the image of Miss Consuelo Burton. It seemed to come to him like an answer to his vague questions. The feminine charms of her smile, her face, her figure, all came back to him, making a vivid picture; but it was not this that at the present moment appealed to him. What appealed to him was the pride that betrayed itself in her every movement, the self-possession underlying every sign of embarrassment; and, above all, a look that he had seen in her eyes that evening—a look of want and inquiry, of desolation and vivid expectancy—a look in whose beauty there was nothing to flatter his vanity, but which made him exclaim half aloud to himself at the thought of it, ‘She too watches, as I watch, but she can see farther. She asks for an answer. She must and she will command one. If ever a woman’s face meant anything, hers this evening meant, “Show me the face of Duty.”’

His thoughts were moving something like clouds in moonlight, not disconnected in any abrupt way, but constantly dissolving and shifting into new and changing shapes. Often, so far as his own consciousness went, he was little

more than a passive, and even an absent spectator of them ; but now and again they would, as it were, arrest him ; and, with his whole intention, he would take an active part in them. It was thus that his thoughts behaved with regard to Miss Consuelo Burton. 'Show me the face of Duty.' He said this to himself several times over, as if it gradually merged into a personal ejaculation of his own ; and then, after some minutes of wandering and indistinct meditation, he caught himself once more murmuring in articulate and coherent words.

'Different !' he said. 'I should think she was different ! Nothing could produce her but a race separate from the rest of the world—separate from them and above them. Nothing could produce her but that which has produced her—the old aristocracy of an old country such as ours. Yes, we *are* different,' and as he said this his pace grew quicker, and his steps as they beat the pavement took something of the emphasis of his thoughts, 'we who can look back through the vistas of centuries, and hear the past speak to us, in our own private language, of our birthright of rule and leadership. Through the avenues of the past voices come echoing down to us, which the people can never hear. They place us for ever on a different level from theirs ; they make for us, if we only choose to listen to them, a second conscience, an added moral faculty——'

Here, both in his thoughts and his walk, he stopped short suddenly, interrupting himself with a low ironical laugh. 'And much good,' he exclaimed, 'this faculty does us ! How does it advise us to exert ourselves ? And how do we try to exert ourselves ?' And like many other men perplexed with moral problems, he forgot his laughter, and looked up at the stars. One or two of the constellations he instantly put a name to ; and he then began idly reflecting how completely he had forgotten the others. Presently, by one of those whimsical caprices with which our thoughts so often startle and entertain us, he found himself dwelling on the image of an old reflecting telescope, once the toy of his

boyhood on many a summer night. A moment more, and, like a figure in a shaken kaleidoscope, that image was gone, and in place of it was the face of Miss Consuelo Burton. 'Her eyes,' he said, 'to me are like the astronomer's speculum, in which I see the star that my naked eye cannot see—the star of duty and labour, that shines over the gate of heaven. The dreams of passion—is this a time for these, when the world is full of trouble, and change, and danger? My star is the star not of passion, but of sacrifice.'

Occupied still with reflections of this kind—with that unwritten poetry which at times visits nearly all of us, and which lifts the minds of the most prosaic to higher levels on the storm of its 'unheard melodies'—he gradually became aware of some external influence by which his mood underwent an unbidden change; and the dreams of passion, which were a moment ago so distant, invaded him, like music, with a tender and yet tumultuous sadness. He started as he realised what the external influence was. It actually was music in the literal sense of the word; and he felt convinced, though he hardly knew why, that it was the same which had fallen on his ears as he was quitting the portico of the hotel. He had not even asked himself then what it was that produced it. He now felt certain that it was a woman's voice.

He listened intently. For a moment it became inaudible. He waited, and then again there swelled another passionate cadence. Faint and far off as it seemed, he could not mistake its meaning. He moved slowly in the direction from which he judged it proceeded, keeping his eyes fixed on the windows of the houses opposite him. Here and there, through blinds or transparent curtains, was a glow of yellow lamplight; but in most cases the Venetian shutters were closed, with the moonlight lying white on them. The voice had now ceased. There was no one stirring. The whole promenade was silent. Presently, as he was beginning to think that his search would prove useless, he heard—and now not very far off from him—the clear notes of a piano.

His eye instinctively fixed on a semi-detached villa, standing back from the road, with a raised garden in front of it. The ground-floor windows were almost concealed from view ; but the upper part of them could be seen from the pavement opposite ; and Carew perceived that a bright light was shining from them, and that one of them was wide open. He had found the house at last ; this was at once plain to him ; and, conscious of a pleasant, half-boyish expectancy, he sat down on a seat which opportunely tempted him, and watched and waited for the song which he divined was imminent.

A few more chords, struck, it seemed, almost at random, came sounding across to him, rich and deep and vibrating, and above them the brilliant ripple of a few notes in the treble ; but they suggested no air—nothing but the touch of a musician. All of a sudden, however, he felt them change their character, and appeal to a something deep down in his memory. They suggested something he was certain he had heard before. But when, and where ? he asked. In a moment the doubt was answered. In a moment, to his surprise, the following song broke on him. It was not sung loudly, but with a liquid and mournful softness ; yet every word was distinct, for his memory now assisted his hearing.

*' Oh, World ! whose days like sunlit waters glide,
Whose music links the midnight with the morrow,
Who for thine own hast Beauty, Power, and Pride—
Oh, World, what art thou ? ' And the World replied,
' A husk of pleasure round a heart of sorrow.'*

*' Oh, Child of God ! thou who hast sought thy way
Where all this music sounds, this sunlight gleams,
Mid Pride, and Power, and Beauty day by day—
And what art thou ? ' I heard my own soul say,
' A wandering sorrow in a world of dreams.'*

That song Carew had heard once before, and he had heard it once only ; and the memory of the woman who then sang it to him breathed from the air and verses as if it

had been some perfume they were full of. 'Could it be she who was now singing it?' he at once began to ask himself. There were many reasons for rejecting the idea as fantastic; yet there in the moonlight he could not resist playing with it; and he remained, when the song had ceased, still sitting and still watching the villa. There was no more music; but presently he heard, or thought he heard, the voice of a woman talking; and then another sound which, though faint, was quite unmistakable—the rattle of an electric bell. Then, a second or two later, he saw the top of one of the open window sashes move a little; he heard a light sound of gravel crunching under footsteps, and became aware that some one was approaching the end of the garden.

Half ashamed of being caught there listening, and yet still more ashamed of letting such a feeling betray itself, he kept his position with what he hoped was an air of indifference, pretending to be occupied for the moment with a cigarette and a matchbox. Meanwhile he was conscious that a female figure had advanced to the balustrade, and was leaning her arms on it, as she stood between two palm-plants.

A vague impression was conveyed to him of colour, and silk, and glitter; but it was some moments before he collected courage to raise his eyes and look at the apparition directly. The moment he did so he sat upright with a start. The woman he saw before him was so singular and so brilliant in her aspect, that she might well have arrested the attention of any one; though had it not been for an air of sadness and refinement about her, she would hardly have suggested to the moralist a world he would call respectable. She was closely enveloped in a light blue opera-cloak bordered with white fur and gorgeous with gold embroideries. On her arms, which were partly visible, and were of dazzling whiteness, was a gleam and a flash of diamonds; whilst her hair, of the palest flaxen, with a few starry blossoms in it, shone over her forehead like a tissue of woven moonbeams.

She must have seen Carew; but she was not looking at

or attending to him. Her lips were parted, as if with a soundless sigh; and her eyes seemed to be gazing far away upon the sea. She might have passed for a siren taken from her native element, and longing for the oblivion to which she had once tempted others.

If she, however, was not noticing Carew, Carew, for his part, was intently staring at her; and a full minute had hardly elapsed since her appearance, when he rose from his seat, walked straight across the road to her, and, raising his hat as he did so, exclaimed, 'Madame de Saint Valery!'

She started at first, with a start of alarm and wonder; for though she had been aware of a figure seated on the bench opposite her, she had given it no attention: but before Carew had reached the pavement under her, she had divined who he was, and with a gasp had pronounced his name.

'You here!' she said. 'And to think of *you* here!'

'Why not?' he replied. 'This is surely a place of meetings. It is I, rather, who should be surprised at the sight of you. When last I heard of you, I heard you were in South America.'

'You have heard much about me probably that had very little truth in it. Some of your friends may even have told you I was enjoying myself. But answer me this—if you did not know I was here, how is it that I find you watching my windows?'

'Your song brought me,' he said. 'I came to it like a moth to a candle. Do you remember the time when I heard you sing it first? Until to-night I have never heard it since.'

'Since then,' she murmured, 'many things have happened to me.'

Carew bent his head, and said in a low tone, 'What things?'

'I have eaten the fruit that you urged me not to eat.'

'Well,' said Carew, with his head still bent, 'and was

the fruit good for food? What have you found life since then?’

‘Listen,’ she said, and she leaned forward and looked down on him, ‘shall I tell you what I have found life since then—yes, and before then?’

‘Tell me,’ he answered.

She paused till he raised his eyes to her; and then, in a low voice that was almost as musical as her singing, said slowly :—

““A husk of pleasure round a heart of sorrow.””

Carew looked at her with an odd sensation of wonder. There was something in her radiant aspect, touched as it was with melancholy, which made it seem as though some unreal light was playing on her, and produced a feeling in him that he was going through a scene in an opera, rather than one in actual life. He was not pleased at the meeting. He was not pleased with the memories awakened by it. He had long ceased to think Madame de Saint Valery worthy of the interest he had once felt in her, and the trouble he had taken to advise her and guide her prudently. Yet all the same, as he heard her voice and looked at her, he began to understand again a thing which he had almost forgotten—how that interest which he had once felt had been excited by her. Presently, however, his attention was suddenly diverted; she too, at the same moment, turned her head rapidly; and there, standing close beside her, was another female form, as beautiful or even more beautiful than her own. The hair was slightly darker, the dress was far simpler, and there was something childlike in the unabashed soft eyes.

Madame de Saint Valery exhibited no confusion on seeing her. ‘Violet,’ she said, ‘here is an old friend of mine, Mr. Carew. Mr. Carew, I think you have never met my cousin, Miss Capel.’

On Miss Capel’s eyes Carew’s were fixed intently, and hers met his without any sign of flinching.

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I think I *have* met her—and so few

hours ago, that I hope she has not forgotten it. I had the good luck to prevent her losing her fan. It was you, wasn't it?' he went on, addressing the fair stranger directly. 'Indeed, if I am not mistaken, there is that very fan in your hand now. Let me look at it—will you?—and I then shall be quite sure.'

She made no movement whatever to do as Carew asked her; but she looked at him fixedly as if he had been some inanimate object, and a grave tantalising smile became slowly visible on her face. Then, by way of answer, she opened the fan wide, and with a little abrupt gesture pressed it against her breast. Carew, as he watched her standing in this attitude, was conscious of precisely the same impression as that which her presence had produced on him at their first meeting amongst the mountains. Again it was as if some new country were opening out before him, all its ways blossoming with lilacs and hawthorns, full of the scents and the alluring air of spring, and yet sad, like spring, with a longing for something that is yet to come. This state of mind, however, was almost in an instant disturbed by the appearance of a servant, who spoke to Madame de Saint Valery; and Carew gathered from what the man said that there was a carriage at the door to take Miss Capel away.

'And so,' he said, 'you are not living with your cousin?'

'No,' she replied, with an accent of slight displeasure at the question. 'I am with my parents. They have been to-night to the theatre, and I must be back by the same time that they are.'

'Indeed you must,' said Madame de Saint Valery. 'This young lady is kept in the very greatest order. It is only by way of a treat that I have been allowed to have her this evening. Violet, come, it is late; your maid is waiting for you, and we must bid Mr. Carew good-night. Perhaps, if he is staying long here, he will come and see me some day.'

Carew, left once more to himself, remained for a few moments eyeing the villa abstractedly; and then turned to

resume his walk along the *Promenade des Anglais*. It was perfectly quiet. Two men, indeed, just as he was in the act of turning, were visible at a short distance, strolling slowly arm-in-arm together ; but they disappeared presently down a side street, and except for Carew himself, there was not a creature stirring.

Stimulated by the solitude, his meditations became as busy as ever again. He was not sorry to have escaped from Madame de Saint Valery ; still he could not help thinking about her, and wondering what kind of life she was leading. He soon found, however, that his thoughts persisted in dwelling on her, less on her own account than on account of her relationship to the girl—to the strange magnetic presence, who was with her. That soft regard, which was at once earnest and languid, passionate and yet ingenuous, mature and yet childlike, haunted his memory as though it were still present. Then the image recurred to him of Miss Consuelo Burton, and he broke for a moment into a low laugh of amusement at the fickleness and agility with which his sentiments changed their object. But the sense of amusement presently died away ; and though these two female figures still held their ground in his consciousness, he ceased to regard the fact in a grotesque or ludicrous light. On the contrary, as he pursued his walk, it assumed a meaning that grew in depth and in suggestiveness, until two ways of life seemed opening out before him ; and one of these figures urged him to tread the one, and the other allured and pleaded with him to be her companion on the other. They were two ways, leading to two different worlds.

One was the world of love, and passion, and poetry, where the hidden prizes of life seemed to be sleeping in the heart, as the rose in the unfolded bud, or the statue in the unhewn marble. The other was a world of ever-widening duties, where love was not absent, but by itself never could satisfy. It was a world where lovers looked beyond their own circle of bliss, and felt that there could be no rest for the soul but in suffering for those that suffer and labouring

for those whose lot their labour could make lighter, and where their deepest union was not when their eyes met, but when side by side they were fixed on a common altar of sacrifice.

‘Once,’ he said, ‘it was enough to work out one’s own salvation—to see that the blossom of one’s own heart expanded, and that the dew of the spirit was lying clear upon it; but now—is not the world changing? Is it any longer enough if my rose blossoms whilst a million rose-trees round me are leafless and have only thorns? Can I,’ and he seemed to see the eyes of Miss Consuelo Burton looking not at but away from him—‘can I forget that the poor are suffering, merely because I may see none suffering round me?’

The current of these reflections was here suddenly broken by a hand laid on his arm, and a man’s voice at his ear. He started and looked round, and there at his side was Mr. Inigo. Whether Mr. Inigo’s resentment, whatever its cause, had actually evaporated or no, there was at all events no trace of it in either his look or manner. On the contrary, his eyes gleamed with an expression of intimate knowingness, and, fixing them on Carew, as if they were a couple of gimlets, he said, after a moment’s pause:—

‘Upon my word, you’re a pretty fellow, you are! We saw you just now—the Prince and I, as we were passing—going through a charming little scene with Madame de Saint Valery—something quite in the style of Romeo and Juliet. I can tell you that there’s been a regular sensation about her at Nice this winter.’

Carew stared at Mr. Inigo with a frigid air of surprise.

‘There has been,’ he said, ‘as you amusingly suggest, an impromptu play. It seems that, also, there has been an impromptu audience.’

Mr. Inigo winced slightly, as if he had been accused of eavesdropping; and then, in a voice of calm and lofty explanation, ‘I passed you,’ he said, ‘just now, as I was seeing Prince Olgourki home. I went back with him from the

Cercle, as far as his own door.' He seemed as he spoke to be buoyed up above the levels of criticism ; and presently with a sigh of proud and privileged sorrow, 'By the way,' he added, 'the beggar—he's just won twelve hundred francs from me—bad luck to him !'

By this time they were close to their hotel, and Carew, acknowledging the information with distant but scrupulous politeness, bade Mr. Inigo good-night and made an instant escape from him.

Mr. Inigo stood for a moment motionless, staring at the door by which Carew had entered. 'Confound the fellow !' he muttered. 'Who is he, I should like to know, that he should give himself these deuced airs with me? If he did mean anything by that which he said just now—if— Well, trust me for being even with him, that's all !'

CHAPTER VIII.

A CONFESSION.

CAREW the following evening was once more in his château. He had gone early in the day to Mrs. Harley's hotel, but had not at once paid his respects to her. He had found some mysterious business there, of which he told her nothing. Having transacted this, he had then spent half an hour with her, and finally made an arrangement that she and her husband should come to him three days later, which would give him time to communicate with the other friends he was expecting. He was now sitting in solitude at his writing-table, and before he went to bed he had finished the following letter. It was a letter to Mrs. Harley.

'Since,' it began, 'I am so soon to see you again, you will wonder, on receiving this, what on earth I can have to say to you. Well, first of all, I am going to say something which certainly sounds most inhospitable. Glad as I am that you are coming, I am glad you are not coming till Thursday. I will now tell you my reason. There are

one or two things as to which I wish to explain myself; I should like to do so before we meet again; and I can do so better by writing than I could by word of mouth. In a moment you will see my meaning.

‘Whenever we meet, as you truly said yesterday, we have always, for some time past, got on the same subjects—subjects so near to the daily lives of all of us, but which people in our class are accustomed to think so little about. You know, of course, what I am speaking of: not of the incidents of mere party politics, but of something compared to which these are merely bubbles on the surface. I am speaking of our existing social civilisation, and our own class in particular, with the future that lies before it—of wealth and poverty, of privilege, and of popular power. We get on these subjects because we both feel their importance—because we both feel that the history of our own coming years is involved in them. I know, for my part, that I think about little else. Night and day they disturb and occupy me, haunting my mind as rooks haunt a rookery. The noise of society may for a time frighten them away, but they come back again the moment the noise ceases, and all the boughs are black with them. I say they are like rooks. So they are, but with a difference. They have the habits of rooks, but they have the voices of ravens.

‘However, let that pass. The practical point is this. When you come here next Friday, we shall no doubt begin about them again; and I want first to say one or two things to you, which will help you to see clearly what my own position is. You know how your views on some social points surprise me. You know, in fact, how—not to mince matters—I can hardly believe that you are quite as sincere in them as you fancy. You, a woman of old and distinguished family, bred in the very heart of an aristocratic society, with the tastes of an aristocracy visible in every one of your surroundings, and the manners of an aristocracy visible in every instinctive movement—in the way you carry your head, in the little things you laugh at—it is impossible

for me to believe that you can really ignore the difference between yourself and—well, how shall I best describe them?—those excellent people we were talking about yesterday, who, however great they may be in point of talent, have not the advantages of the same social history. I am not talking of the qualities which distinguish you as an individual. I am talking of those which distinguish you as belonging to a certain class. For social purposes, individual qualities are very little more than the strings are in a violin; but that class which you belong to, with its natural position, with its memories, with its historic consciousness, is the body of the violin itself. And think what a structure this violin is! All the centuries of our country's life are embodied in it. It is as subtle a piece of work as any masterpiece of Stradivarius; and suppose it destroyed, before we could reproduce it we should have to reproduce a thousand years of history. Think what you mean yourself by high-bred ladies and gentlemen. Think of the social tone that prevails amongst them. You will realise as fully as I do that its ease combined with courtesy, its grace without affectation, is possible only amongst a privileged circle of people with a special present position which reposes on a special past.

‘Have I said one word in which you do not agree with me? In spite of all your fondness for the “other people” who amuse you so much, I am perfectly confident that you must agree with me thus far. Now, however, I am going to part company with you, and soar into the regions of what you would call the ridiculous. I’m not at all certain that I don’t myself agree with you. But I can’t help it. What I feel I feel. Do you know old Lady Mangotsfield? Just before I left London I dined with her, and during dinner the conversation turned upon heraldry. “My dear,” she said to me, “we have none of us our right number of quarterings; our shocking system of marriage has always prevented that. You and I ought both of us to have a hundred and twenty-eight. We are the only people in England they would not be thrown away upon.” Well, so far as I am concerned,

Lady Mangotsfield was perfectly right. As for a hundred and twenty-eight, I won't speak about that. I will content myself with sixty-four ; and I can honestly tell you that, were such a bargain possible, I would, for the power to prove my own sixty-four quarterings, pay a good third of the income that will be probably mine some day. In the male line, as you know, we go straight back to the Conquest ; and we have married into some of the very noblest families, not only of England, but of France and Italy also. But—there is always a *but* somewhere—we have married into other families as well ; and if, in such a place as the old hall at Otterton—the old hall which it has always been my dream to restore—I were to prepare places for the sixty-four shields I speak of, twenty of them at least would be blanks. Each of the blanks, every time I looked at it, would be a blow to me. Can you imagine anything sillier ? I doubt if I can ; and the logic of my prejudices is, in actual life, constantly melted or blown to the winds by friendship. But, particular cases apart, the prejudice still exists in me. It is deep in my heart ; I can't get rid of it. My feelings as to this matter are Austrian far more than English ; and when I hear it discussed whether such and such a man is a gentleman, I long to put the question in the simpler language of the Continent, and ask to be told whether or no he is *noble*.

‘There's one side of me ; and I think I have drawn it plainly enough. I now come to the other ; and it is this other side which I am most anxious to show you. During the last three or four years—the very years during which my class prejudices have been strengthening—I have been setting myself to do something which I never did before. I have been studying the condition, the sorrows, the claims, and the hopes of the poor. I have been studying the classes who live by manual labour—those on whose shoulders all civilisation rests.

‘How many of us die, having known that these classes exist, and yet having never, in any vital way, realised it ! I have realised it at last ; the idea of them and their lot

has become constantly present to me, and I have been affected by it very much in the same way as a man who has passed his whole life by a duck-pond is affected by the sight of the seashore and of the Atlantic.

‘I said just now, in speaking of social tone, in speaking of certain commanding and graceful qualities, that the individual as an individual was nothing more than a violin string, whilst the body of the violin, on which the tone depended, was an historical and hereditary aristocracy. Let me use the same comparison again, but with a deeper meaning. If an historical aristocracy is the body of the social violin, the People is the body of the moral violoncello. The vibrations of our moral existence become music only through their relations to that, and through the resonance it gives them.

‘Are you not astonished to hear me speak like this, especially considering the way in which I was speaking only last night, and the wonderful confessions with which I began this letter? Perhaps you will think that my popular sympathies are merely a piece of sentiment with which I idly like to amuse myself in a seclusion, where I have given myself no chance of ever putting them into practice. That, however, is certainly not the case. I love this castle, these walls and towers, these painted ceilings, these carved and emblazoned chimney-pieces, for the same reason that I love these old mediæval towns. I love them because they are to my mind like a mirror in which the past is reflected, when Radicals were not, and equality was not dreamed of—the past when men recognised their superiors, and ordered themselves reverently, with no sense of humiliation. But I am here, usually alone, not for the sake merely of flattering my own prejudices ; I am here to continue a study of things which are essentially modern. I am here to study that greatest of modern questions—not how to reconcile the People with their present lot, but how to make their lot one with which they shall be willing to be reconciled.

‘No doubt you will wonder what I can mean by all this. When you come, I will show you.

‘Anyhow, as for my views, here is an honest sketch of them. I wonder if you agree with them. There is one person, at any rate, who, I think, does; and that is Miss Consuelo Burton. I wish you could have brought her here with you. Unless I misunderstand her on the point I have just alluded to, she would have added much to the interest of the party. But I fear that her coming is quite out of the question. You shall judge for yourself, however. You saw that her sisters were very fairly civil to me, especially when they found that I was still friends with their Cardinal. But I did venture last night to suggest to them an expedition here, and I saw plainly that they were not anxious to come. It is hardly likely, therefore, that they would let her come without them. Still, if your diplomacy could manage the matter, you know what will please me; and, now I think of it, you might mention to them, what is quite true, that I am expecting amongst my visitors two most excellent Catholics, Lady Chislehurst and a genuine live priest.

‘You told me yesterday that my friends would be too smart for you. But my priest—will he be too smart? You won’t say so, I think, when you have seen him. I have mentioned him particularly, not merely as a bait to catch Miss Consuelo with, but also because a little tale hangs on his visit to me; and I have confessed to you already so many of my own follies, that I am going to venture to add this to their number.

‘Well, in spite of my idle life and many faults, some of which have been real enough, some only invented for me, you give me, I know, credit for having at least enough notion of duty to make me unhappy—I don’t say at not doing it, but at not even seeing clearly what ought to be done. You know how widespread is the sense of doubt and bewilderment amongst all classes, and specially amongst our own, as to what we should do with ourselves, not only as

moral beings, but also as people inheriting a particular place in society. And I can tell you honestly, and without any exaggeration, that, for my own part, unless I am to loathe my very existence, some clear notion of duty I must possess or struggle for; and if other people are to inspire me with any real interest, the same want must be in their natures too.

‘Such being the case, towards the end of the London season, when many things had gone wrong with me, and all the preceding weeks stared me in the face—a cluster of wasted days—I was sitting one morning in the park, and thinking, with a sense of rest, of making a retreat to my cousin’s beautiful villa, with its fountains, its terraces, and its oleanders, on the breast of the Lago Maggiore. I was thinking of this, when the idea suddenly flashed upon me of getting together a small informal society, whose members were to be bound together only by the four following links. They were all of them to have this same sense I speak of—that we each of us have some duty, could we only find it out; and that, having no duty, we simply are beasts and fools: and they were all to appreciate the changing state of society, sufficiently to see that our duty was no longer clear to us. Secondly, they were all of them, I do not say to be Christians, but at least to regard Christianity with minds open to conviction, and take at their true worth the maudlin inanities of the Humanitarians. Thirdly, as to their personal conduct, there were to be no severe requirements. A member, for instance, would not be expelled even supposing he had run away with another man’s wife; though naturally he would not be allowed to bring the lady to our meetings. He would be expelled for one thing only—namely, if, having run away with her, or made himself too agreeable to her, he accommodated his theories to suit his practice, and, by persuading himself that his conduct was right, deliberately closed his ears to the religion which would pronounce it wrong. The last qualification of the members was, that they were all to be ladies and gentlemen; and, considering

the remarks with which I began this letter, you will know well enough what I mean by that.

‘And now you will ask, What was this society to do? With what object was it to be got together? The question, I confess, is a little hard to answer. That object, when I try to describe it in words, seems to shrivel up or vanish directly the words touch it; or, at least, to become so slight and trivial as to look like a quaint fancy strayed into the daylight from a dream. But, if your imagination and sympathy will meet me half-way, you will see, perhaps, that my words suggest more than they actually describe. Well, what the society was to do was this. Its members were simply to meet each other at certain intervals, at various country houses belonging to one or other of them, and such meetings would constitute a kind of informal retreat. Yes, you say, but what then? When these good people met, what was to be their programme? Were they to read papers, or to have formal discussions, as if they were members of a Social Science Congress? Nothing of the kind. There was to be no programme whatever; nothing out of the common was to be expected of them. They were to be free, if they liked, to behave themselves as idly and as pleasantly as they would if they were paying any ordinary country visit. How, then, you may ask, would such meetings differ from such a visit? They would differ, I hoped, in this way: not in what those concerned would be required to do, but in what they naturally *would* do. Naturally, easily, without any stiffness or formality, some talk would arise, some exchange of ideas, with regard to those subjects which were the basis of their association. Sometimes it would be cynical, sometimes flippant; sometimes it would be earnest and serious; sometimes it would deal with the subjects in question directly; sometimes merely by implication, the immediate subject being, perhaps, a piece of gossip. Its tone would vary, and I should expect it to vary. Sometimes there would be little of it, and sometimes much. But I am persuaded that, could my

idea ever be carried into execution—and I have by no means given it up—the members would, when such a meeting was over, carry away from it some idea or experience which would make life certainly richer, possibly more clear, and which, even if it did not make them practically more useful, would at any rate sharpen their moral sight sufficiently to make their uselessness a deeper and more unpardonable sin.

‘Well, such was my scheme. I conceived it, as I told you, in a moment of depression and perplexity, when I felt the want of some sense of companionship ; and though I cannot say that, as yet, my society is actually formed, I have one or two friends who already understand me, and are willing, when the occasion comes, to be members of it. One of them is the Catholic priest I spoke of. The other is Lord Aiden. These are not all, but I mention them specially now, because they will both, I hope, be here during your visit.

‘Lord Aiden you know ; so I needn’t say much about him. But think of him for a moment, and I am quite sure you will agree with me that he is the very man cut out to be a brother of our order. No doubt he is not one who directly would guide or strengthen us. He wants a new gospel ; he certainly has not got one, and even as for his wants, he takes them rather lazily ; but his presence always seems to fill a room with suggestion. Think how many of the fruits of life he has tasted. He has written poetry which is read all over Europe ; all over Europe women have fallen in love with him : at the same time, he has been an astute man of affairs, and has occupied one of the most splendid and brilliant posts which a public career can offer a British subject. And yet he has not found the pearl of price. He is old enough to know that he has not found it. He is not so old that he has lost the desire to find it.

“Yes,” you will say, “Lord Aiden is all very well ; but what possible place in your society can there be for a Catholic priest ? Whether he is right or wrong in his idea

of duty, what duty is, must, for him, be beyond question. He has got his pearl, or what he thinks his pearl, and he must stick to it." I expect you will say that ; it is a very natural thought ; but wait till you see him, and then you will think differently. You don't like Papists, I know ; but you won't object to this one. I don't mean to tell you that he is not perfectly orthodox ; and he's just as intolerant as most intellectual Catholics are—that is to say, for a man who has any convictions, he is certainly one of the most tolerant men imaginable. He is also a perfect man of the world. He was once in the Guards, once he stood for Parliament, and he once had a confidential appointment under a Conservative Home Secretary. If it were not for his dress, you would not on first meeting him suspect him to be a priest. You would only, perhaps, wonder at two things—the shadow on his face as of premature old age, and the knowledge of the world stamped on it, with the absence of any taint of the world. Also, unless the conversation were to turn directly on religion, you might talk for days to him without knowing what his religion was. I say *you* might ; but there I am wrong, and I retract the word. You would, I think, in time detect the truth ; but this would not be because he flashed his spiritual lamp into your eyes, but because, though the lamp was hidden, you would recognise the light that fell from it on all the secular subjects which have been for years past engrossing him. What these subjects are you will discover when you come here ; and I think the discovery will be very interesting and wholesome for you.

'There is nothing in him that could offend, there is nothing in him that could even annoy you ; but there is, on the other hand, much—yes, I must say this again—that will interest, astonish, and be good for you. You will see that, fixed though his religious views are, the problems presented to him by this epoch of change we live in are to him as perplexing and real as they are to you and me, and that his ears are as open as ours can be to the cry that is rising around

us for some new moral revelation. Of course, the Church is always, according to his view, the same ; but the world is always changing, and its needs are always changing, and there is always in this way something new for the Church to discover. "The Catholic Church," he once said to me, "is the Columbus of modern society who will guide us eventually to the new moral continent which other explorers are trying to reach in vain."

'However, there is no occasion for me to go on describing him. When you come here, you will be able to judge of him for yourself. He was the first person to whom I spoke about my projected society, and he is the person who has best understood my idea and most fully sympathised with it. He approves thoroughly of my rules, even my moral ones, and especially those relating to our social qualifications and fastidiousness.

'I tell you all this because I have some hope it may interest you. But do not alarm yourself with the thought that when you arrive next Thursday you will find the society in conclave, and be asked to take part in its deliberations. My society, as I tell you, is as yet not even formed ; it possibly never will be. Our party here will be nothing but an ordinary meeting of friends : I venture to hope, a pleasant one.

'I have one other scheme—I might almost say plot—in my head, with regard to one other person ; but it is so daring and requires so much resolution to bring about, that I must tantalise you for the present by observing a discreet silence about it. If it comes to anything, you will find it out quite soon enough. Meanwhile, it may amuse you to puzzle over it.

'I wait for Thursday with impatience. I am longing to show the château to you. Good-night. The clock in the tower, which is striking half-past eleven, was given to a Courbon-Loubet by Henri Quatre.'

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

AN ENCHANTED CHÂTEAU.

THE inland district which lies between Nice and Cannes can be reached by carriage with perfect ease from either place ; but to the average visitor who frequents these towns in the winter, it is a district practically as strange and as far off as Siberia. Of course, from the railway he has general hasty views of it. He is familiar enough with the shapes of its distant mountains, and the white and sparkling dots which he knows must be mountain villages. He is aware also of the vast intervening landscape ; and he constantly looks towards its soft, bewildering ranges, expecting them to yield to the atmosphere some new surprise of colour. But of these ranges as objects of local knowledge, with a local civilisation lurking in their folded hollows, he thinks no more than he does of the clouds that surround a sunset. He never asks why this variety of colour visits them—why some are a pearly grey, and why others are fledged with purple. He never dreams that here are fields of violets, and here terraced vineyards, and here romantic regions of un conjectured pine-forests. Still less does he dream of the people by whom the district is inhabited ; of the embattled ramparts that their villages are still surrounded by ; of the streets and fountains that have been unchanged for centuries ; of the vaulted smithies, the old echoing drinking-shops, which are the same as they were in the days of the seigneurs ; of the feudal mills and farmhouses, still used and tenanted ; and of the roofless castles that on many a hidden eminence still rear their towers, with hardly a sign of ruin.

Certainly these sights and scenes were entirely new to Mrs. Harley, as with two companions—her husband and another lady—she was passing through them on her journey to Courbon-Loubet, in a huge old-fashioned travelling carriage which Carew had sent for them. For the first half-hour or so they had rumbled through the suburbs of Nice. The express from Paris had been sweeping by with its sleeping-cars, and the walls on each side of the road were red and blue with advertisements. An hour later, and the stamping horses were dragging them over rough mediæval paving-stones, through a street where the newest and gaudiest-looking house had been last re-decorated before the First Revolution ; where the old women sat at their doors spinning, with hats like those of witches and with distaffs worthy of the Fates ; where brown shy faces peered at them through grated windows, or from under mysterious arches, out of wells of darkness ; and where every head, as the carriage passed, was raised and bent with a mixture of grave respect and of frankness. All seemed to belong to an epoch not the present, from the fantastic beggar with his fur cap held out to them, to the old coachman, gaudy in faded livery, and the arms and coronet repeated on every panel.

‘In fact,’ said Mrs. Harley, when they were once more in the country, and were entering a road that led through a wild pine-forest, ‘Mr. Carew was perfectly right in telling us that a visit to him would be an excursion into the last century. Of course,’ she added, ‘he can know nothing except the surface of things—no more do we. But so far as the surface goes, I must say the illusion is perfect. It’s quite as good as a scene at a first-rate theatre.’

Presently there was visible through a sudden opening of the trees a far-off village perched on the side of an Alpine precipice ; and the coachman, gathering from their exclamations what it was that had attracted them, turned round and said in a grave whisper that it was a village of bad repute, and that all the women in it were sorceresses.

‘Better and better still,’ exclaimed Harley, in high good

humour. 'Let us hope, however, that the Republic does not burn them. Look, what a forest this is! It covers the whole ridge, and here we are about to toil to the top of it. The very place for the witches to have a midnight picnic with the Devil in! I shouldn't wonder if it were the beginning of the domain of Courbon-Loubet; and I am every moment expecting to catch some glimpse of the château frowning down at us over these savage pine-trees.'

They all looked about them with a growing sense of excitement, prepared to be startled at every fresh opening with a vision of roofs and turrets. They were, however, doomed to be disappointed. Time went on; the forest was left behind them; and not a sign of a château was to be seen anywhere. Harley suggested that they should make an inquiry of the coachman. The two ladies, however, would by no means assent to this. It would be, they said, like looking at the end of a novel; and whatever the end might prove in the present case, they wished their uncertainty to be kept up till the last.

Meanwhile they were descending the hill on the other side, into a richer but far tamer region. In place of the wild pine-forest there were soft groves of olives, and below were winding meadows kept green by sparkling watercourses. Here they would pass a field of as yet bloomless roses; here another that was mottled with purple violets, and made all the air fragrant. Presently tufted palms began to be not infrequent; an occasional row of geraniums made a rude hedge along the roadside; and in another moment they were in a land of orange-trees, that reminded them too strongly of the well-known suburbs of Nice. They could trace for some distance the course of the road ahead of them. They could see how it wound round the base of a wooded knoll; how it passed an antique oil-mill, roofed with rugged tiles; how it mounted a stone bridge with quaint irregular arches, and then lay like a ribbon between a curving line of poplars.

There was something in the whole scene eminently

warm and southern—too much so, indeed, to entirely please the travellers.

‘I declare,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘we have been taken in after all. This is like Italy far more than feudal France. It is a country for villas, not a country for castles. See!’ she went on, when they had proceeded somewhat farther, and were skirting a hill crowded with luxuriant foliage, ‘the very forests here are like gardens more than forests! Look at these trees, George—neat to the very sky-line!’

But before Harley could make any response to his wife, they were both startled by a sudden exclamation from their companion. ‘Look!’ she said, ‘look—not at the trees, but above them! What is that brown thing rising up in the air there?’

They looked, and sure enough they perceived the object in question. It was tall and straight, but otherwise of uncertain figure; and at first, except for its singularity, conveyed no impression to any one. In another moment, however, Harley had solved the enigma. ‘It is the five-sided tower,’ he said, ‘of the Château de Courbon-Loubet, and the seigneur’s flag, as large as life, on the top of it.’

He was still speaking when the carriage turned sharply round, and, meeting a side road, which had not till then been visible, paused presently before some rusty iron gates. They were gates adorned with twisted ciphers and coronets, and were hung on two stately but now crumbling pillars. At one side was a lodge, with a defaced cipher upon it also; and opposite this, and looking equally uncared for, was a gaunt wooden crucifix, its base covered with brambles. A whistle from the coachman brought out an old tottering man, scrambling into a coat that had been once part of a livery. He raised his hat with an almost religious reverence; the gates were opened, and the carriage plunged forward. The travellers found themselves entering a long shadowy carriage drive, which wound gradually upwards round the sides of the wooded hill. Above and below them were banks of mossy turf, and here and there a small lawny

opening ; but whichever direction the eye took the view was bounded by a network of trees or shrubs. The approach seemed endless, as they still kept mounting higher ; and nothing more had as yet been seen of the château. By-and-by, however, the forest trees became fewer, and the shrubs larger and more closely massed together, the sunlight fell on the golden globes of oranges, and walls of cleft myrtle, tier above tier, were discernible. At last, rising bright over one of these green ramparts, Mrs. Harley's eyes caught sight of a fountain of white camellia blossoms ; and at the same time a wall with a succession of low towers was seen through the screen of leaves to be beetling directly over them. A moment later every screen had vanished ; they had emerged on an open platform, from which, for miles and miles, they could see the country like a luminous map below them—village and mountain, gardens, fields, and vineyards, and farther away still the shining hyacinth of the sea. But the revelation was instantaneous only. They had hardly had time to realise it when it was again hidden from them, and they were passing in darkness under the arch of a sombre gateway. Then the hoofs of the horses stamped on a wooden drawbridge ; the carriage again swept out into the daylight ; and now, for the first time, with all its details distinct to them, before their eyes was the Château de Courbon-Loubet.

It was a large building, in shape an irregular square, with the tower which they had seen already standing at one end of it, and here and there a turret, of the same height as the walls, breaking their monotonous surface with a bulging semicircle. It was certainly different from what the party had pictured to themselves. Architecturally it had no beautiful feature. The many windows, disposed at uneven heights, were mere square apertures, and were flanked with Venetian shutters ; and the pile, from roof to basement, was covered with dingy stucco. But in spite of this, it had an air of dejected dignity ; the stucco itself must have been more than a century old, and have expressed the taste of a

man who wore a periwig; whilst here and there, where a piece chanced to have fallen, a glimpse could be caught of the mediæval masonry. The arched entrance at which the carriage drew up presented several sights that were even more pleasing to the imagination. Amongst them was an enormous scutcheon and coronet, which had been only so much damaged by the popular zeal of the Revolutionists as to give to its survival an air of tranquil defiance. But other things struck the travellers, of equal or even greater interest. Two carriages, very much like their own, only older, dustier, and under the charge of postillions, were being emptied of portmanteaus and boxes by a mixed group of domestics, mostly French, but with a few maids and footmen unmistakably English amongst them.

‘Here’s grandeur!’ said Mrs. Harley. ‘Maids, cockades, footmen, and gentlemen’s gentlemen! We little knew what our friend was letting us in for.’

The carriage had stopped just as she was in the act of speaking, and Harley’s valet, directed by the coachman, had already tugged at a dangling iron bell-pull, and elicited a clang that would have done honour to Westminster Abbey. But its summons was hardly necessary. A liveried *concierge*, gaudy and faded as the coachman, with armorial buttons as big as a five-franc piece, was already descending the steps, slow with age and dignity, and was receiving the arrivals as if they had been all of the blood royal. Meanwhile, at a moment’s notice, he had been reinforced by a tribe of other retainers—odd-looking footmen whose clothes were a trifle smarter, and a brisk butler with a grin of delighted welcome, who, to judge by his looks, had probably come from Paris, and alone of all his surroundings suggested the civilisation of to-day.

Under his guidance the party passed through the archway, and found themselves in an open court which occupied the centre of the building, and which, to their surprise, they found was alive with people. Here the impression that they had dived into another age became, if possible, more

complete than ever. There were many more traces of early architectural detail. Over every door was some shield or monogram; there was a curious well in the middle, railed round with ironwork. But it was the human element that contributed to the effect most. Close to the well were loitering several green-coated *chasseurs*, with their guns slung over their shoulders and their powder-horns at their sides; whilst slowly moving past them a body of swarthy peasants were pushing a rude truck, with the carcass of a wild boar on it, towards a smoky door which suggested the regions of the kitchen. To crown all, high overhead the great flag was fluttering on the top of the tall tower, and Mrs. Harley, for a moment looking up at it, was startled to see that it bore on it no private *blâzon*, but that it was neither more nor less than the royal banner of France. Presently there was observed a general slight commotion; there was a touching of hats, men were moving aside, and Carew the next instant was advancing to meet his visitors.

‘The others,’ he said to Mrs. Harley, as he was escorting them into the house, ‘have not arrived yet, but will be here before dinner, and their luggage has come before them. And so you have actually been able to bring your companion with you! You may imagine my pleasure when I got your note this morning.’

Their arrival was well-timed. The warmth and the brilliance of the afternoon were ending just as they had driven up to the château; and by the time they had got rid of the dust of travel, and had met in a small saloon round a quaint cluster of tea-cups, the west had begun to flush with the first colours of the sunset. They were full of the glimpses they had already had of the interior—the narrow crooked corridors, pale with Italian frescoes; the wide oak staircase, hung with dingy portraits; the size of their bedrooms, and the stately canopies of their beds; whilst the white-and-gold wainscot which now surrounded them would have made the heart of a Bond Street decorator flutter.

‘I have,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘already remarked during

our drive here that our whole adventures to-day seem exactly like a scene out of a play; and the boar in the courtyard and the royal flag on the tower—they, Mr. Carew, make the impression almost complete. Nothing is wanting now but a chorus of virtuous peasants to dance on the green—if you have a green—by moonlight.'

'Well,' said Carew, smiling, and yet with an air of gravity, 'I shouldn't be surprised if we did manage something of that kind.'

His manner was such as to make Mrs. Harley stare at him. 'My dear Mr. Carew,' she said, 'what *have* you been getting up to amuse us?'

'Perhaps,' said Carew presently, after a little more catechising, 'I had better tell you at once what is in the wind for this evening. To-day is the birthday of a certain distinguished personage, who would, if he had his rights, be now on the throne of France; and my cousin, Gaston de Courbon-Loubet, whether he has been here or not, has always had the day kept as a *fête* at the château. After to-night our party will be only a small one; but, for to-night, a few people are coming over from Cannes, and in Gaston's place we must do our best to entertain them.'

'Who are they?' said Mrs. Harley. 'Please let us know whom we are to meet.'

'Our own party, as I call it,' said Carew, 'consists of Frederic Stanley; of Lady Chislehurst, who will arrive to-morrow; of Lord Aiden, who arrives this evening—he ought to be here now——'

'Hark!' interposed Harley; 'did not you hear a bell?'

'I did,' said his wife; 'it is certainly some one coming.' And she begged Carew, both for herself and her young companion, that they might make their escape upstairs to rest themselves, before the appearance of any fresh arrivals.

Seated at her window, in an old brocaded chair, with a faint smell of antiquity breathing from the hangings close to her, Mrs. Harley leaned on her hand reflectively, and watched the change outside that was stealing over the wide

landscape. The sun had already sunk ; the twilight had lost its clearness ; colour after colour was fading from cloud and mountain ; and presently all was grey but one long tract of primrose, and the far-off Esterels cutting it with their peaks of violet.

CHAPTER II.

Ô RICHARD, Ô MON ROI !

THERE are few moments, during a visit to a country house, of such general interest to the whole party assembled as the first meeting before the first dinner ; and in the present case, to Mrs. Harley at least, this interest was even keener than usual. All the conditions were so much out of the common, she was in a pleasing uncertainty as to what to expect next : and whilst she was dressing the passage outside was constantly creaking with the hurry of unknown footsteps. Everything, indeed, was suggestive of coming surprise.

Her first surprise was the room in which the meeting took place. Mrs. Harley, on entering it, found herself in such a blaze of candle-light, glittering everywhere from chandeliers and sconces, that her dazzled eyes could hardly realise where she was ; but when she recovered herself, the first impression produced on her was that she had been suddenly transported into some antique Italian palace. The mosaic floor, the gorgeous painted ceiling, on which Phaeton was seen in the act of falling from his chariot, the damask walls, and the heavy gilded furniture, all suggested Genoa of two centuries back. It was indeed the work of a renowned Genoese artist, and in old times it was celebrated as one of the wonders of Provence.

What struck the Harleys, however, both wife and husband too, was not the room only, but the company that was already assembled there. There were a number of ladies,

certainly not English, some of whom—one in particular—glittered with pearls and diamonds, whilst those others who were anything less than splendid were almost more imposing by their semi-religious dowdiness. There were men, as certainly not English, also, amongst whom were a couple of rosy priests, and several pairs of languid eyes and moustaches, the vision of which made Harley's insular mind at once frame to itself the ungenerous word 'Puppies!'

He and his wife were receiving this general but confused impression, when Carew came forward to meet them, and a distinguished-looking man with a star and a blue ribbon along with him. The latter, to judge by appearances, was probably about eight-and-forty; but appearances in his case were, in one way, oddly ambiguous. His thoughtful and piercing eyes were at once alert and dreamy; his dress suggested at once fashion and negligence; and altogether he produced a mixed impression, as of a younger man than he was, with the burdens of one far older.

He greeted the Harleys in an almost caressing manner, and Mrs. Harley had just begun a sentence, 'My dear Lord Aiden——' when she was aware that some one had slowly approached the group—another man, of a very different character—and that Carew was waiting to introduce him. A glance at his face was enough to show that he was a cleric; a glance at his dress enough to show that he was a Catholic priest. But his type was very different from that of the two French *abbés*; and Mrs. Harley, even before his name was mentioned, felt sure that she was in the presence of Mr. Stanley.

'And now,' said Carew presently, 'you must know some of the others.' He hastily pointed out to her several French ladies of distinction—ornaments of the Faubourg Saint Germain; and one princess—the most gorgeous person present, who had reigned as a beauty under the Second Empire. He then added a word or two with respect to the men; and in another moment she and her husband also were being made acquainted with various *vicomtes* and

duchesses, whose family titles, if not their personal names, are part of the history and part of the fame of France. Presently Mrs. Harley, amongst the murmur of strange voices, heard herself being addressed, with an air of command, in English. Turning round, she was conscious of the light tap of a fan, and there, with a cold shoulder given to the Princess and her diamonds, and a smile almost of deference to a lady in black next her, herself even blacker and dowdier, was sitting Lady Mangotsfield. There she was, the greatest of great ladies, the finest specimen of the fossil Tory in existence, whose political principles had been so firmly fixed in her childhood, that they were the one thing in England which time had been unable to change, and were still just what they had been before the first Reform Bill.

Mrs. Harley, no doubt, was a little bit afraid of her; and, thinking her in London, was taken aback at seeing her. When, therefore, a greeting had passed between them, she was somewhat relieved at being again addressed by Carew, who began to speak to her in a low tone of voice. 'Every one is here,' he said—'every one but your *protégée*.'

'To be sure,' said Mrs. Harley. 'It's the very thing I was thinking of. Had I known there would have been all these people, I would have waited and come down with her. She's a bit late, for she has only my maid to dress her. If you will allow me, I will go up and fetch her.'

Carew assented, and she was preparing to do so when, turning towards the door, she saw that it was opening; and a moment after, in an exquisite white dress, a bunch of scarlet berries at her breast, and another cluster of them in her hair, tugging a little impatiently at one long *gant de Suède*, and a little embarrassed with the other glove and her fan, Mrs. Harley's *protégée* entered—Miss Consuelo Burton.

The eyes of the younger Frenchmen were in an instant fixed on her; an old and portly *duc* raised his eyeglass with interest; and Lord Aiden, laying his hand on Carew's shoulder, gently murmured, 'My dear fellow, who is this beautiful creature?'

‘She is the person,’ said Carew, ‘who will be one of your neighbours at dinner. You will have to take in the old Duchesse de —— ; and ask her to show you the locket she has on, with the most beautiful picture imaginable of Marie Antoinette in it.’

He had hardly done speaking before the announcement was made to him—the solemn announcement—that Monsieur’s dinner was served. Two tapestry curtains at the end of the room parted ; two gilded doors were slowly flung open ; another constellation of lights was seen shining beyond ; and to this the company, between two lines of domestics, were presently moving—a stately and bright procession.

‘Magnificent ! splendid !’ murmured Lord Aiden dreamily, as his eyes wandered over the plate and china on the table. ‘This is altogether a wreck saved from the past. Those dishes are all of the finest Sèvres.’

‘Yes,’ said the old *duchesse* next him. ‘And there’s hardly a thing here which has not some history—you may be perfectly sure of that. The Courbon-Loubets once were one of the greatest houses in France ; and amongst the old houses they are still one of the richest.’

Soon, however, their attention was taken from plate and china by a sound of political discussion, which had sprung up round the table. The politics discussed, for the most part, were French, not English ; and this was perhaps natural ; for not only amongst the company were the French in a large majority, but whilst England was on the eve of an election, France was actually in the middle of one ; and strong hopes were entertained all over the country that the world was about to witness in it a Conservative and a Royalist reaction.

‘I think I should die happy,’ said Carew, towards the end of dinner, ‘if I could see the time when the Parisian graveurs would once more, in humility, be dedicating their engravings “to the King.”’ His nearest neighbour smiled, and received this speech with sympathy ; and Carew, having

turned for a moment to whisper something to a servant, added, 'And I should die even happier if I could know that Paris had once more a Bastille.'

'And we,' said an old *marquis*, with a look in his worn face half of melancholy, half of past dissipation, 'should have something fit to live for if we had only a king to die for.'

Carew glanced from him to one or two of the younger dandies, with a feeling, if not an expression, of something like contempt. Then he cast a hasty look behind him, as if to see whether some order was being executed.

The old *marquis*, who had been intently watching him, seemed to divine his thoughts, and said, with a glance at the younger dandies also, 'They, too, would die, as their fathers died before them.'

At that instant the conversation stopped suddenly, and all the company started. Suddenly the room had been filled with a burst of orchestral music ; and it was then perceived that at one end of it was a musicians' gallery, almost lost in the shadow, and that now this was occupied by a band, and glimmering with shaded lights. By the time the surprise of the sound and the discovery had subsided, the company found they were listening to an air which, for them at least, was charged beyond all others with meaning, with hope, with memories. It was 'Ô Richard, ô mon Roi, l'univers t'abandonne' ; and for a moment it almost seemed to them that the dining-room of Courbon-Loubet had become transformed into the memorable Hall of the Opera.

Other airs followed, various and more lively ; and the excellence of the performers having attracted general comment, Carew informed his friends that he had had them over from Nice, and that one or two of them had been members of the orchestra at Monte Carlo.

At last the time came when the company rose ; and the ladies and gentlemen, following the French fashion, left the room together. The drawing-room presented a scene not more brilliant, but more animated, than it had done before

dinner. Lady Mangotsfield was enthroned on a comfortless Louis Quinze sofa, with a Legitimist *duc* on one side and a Legitimist *duchesse* on the other ; and the three were quietly rejoicing in the complete concord of their prejudices. Lady Mangotsfield differed from her friends upon two points only. She could never forgive the society of some sixty years back in Vienna for presuming to think that Lady S—— V—— was not a suitable match for Prince E—— or for any man ; and also the Pope and all his works were things she could not abide. The first sore point, however, there was now no call to touch upon ; and as to the second, in spite of her sound Protestantism, though fasting and the Mass did little good to the soul, she considered them as excellent protests against Republican principles.

Meanwhile from the younger Frenchmen Miss Consuelo Burton was receiving a great deal of attention—in especial from one, who was a great admirer of England, and whose English, if not so correct, was as fluent and as impertinent as his French. There were two people who were not quite pleased at this spectacle. One was the Princess ; but she was partially consoled by Lord Aiden, with whom she discussed many curious scenes at the Tuileries. The other was Carew, who had no consolation of that kind, but before long found one when, on receiving a message from a servant, he begged the company to come all of them to the windows ; or, if they were not afraid of the air, to go outside on to the ramparts. There was at once a general movement, and a general sense of expectation. The elderly ladies presently had all of them their faces at the panes ; the others, the night being mild, were already in the open air, and Carew, through the exercise of a little social diplomacy, contrived to find himself close to Mrs. Harley and Miss Consuelo Burton.

The ramparts on which they were standing commanded a deep valley, with the huddling roofs of the village almost directly under them, and on the opposite side a succession of wooded hills. In a moment or two Mrs. Harley became aware of a noise like that of a crowd hoarsely murmuring

somewhere ; and looking over the parapet, she saw that some fifty feet below her was an open space, completely filled with people.

‘You see,’ said Carew, ‘there are our virtuous peasants—the one thing which, according to you, was wanting.’

A cry of surprise here broke from every one. There sounded through the night the clear notes of a bugle, and suddenly, from point after point on the hills opposite, and again from the brushwood deep down in the valley, there burst forth a succession of coloured fires—blue, green, purple, gold, and crimson—growing, tremulously fading, and then again growing, palpitating like enchanted glow-worms. They burnt for a minute or two, and then showed signs of dying ; but before they were out the horn again sounded, and high into the air, with its long trail, sang a rocket, and then broke noiselessly into a falling flock of stars. Another followed, and another, in brisk succession. Then a glow was perceived in a different quarter, and, at various spots on the ground below and opposite, cascades and wheels of fire began to revolve and glitter. These, though pretty enough, were in themselves not out of the common ; but when at last they had come to an end, and there had been a dull interval of a moment or two, fresh sparks simultaneously were struck in a number of places, and, the second after, the whole of the sloping woodland became a glittering garden of white and quivering *fleur de lys*. A shout rose from the whole assembly below, which was echoed in milder tones by those above them on the ramparts. The royal flowers remained for some time bright and steadfast ; then at last they too became visibly fainter. But they were not yet out, or at least only a few of them, when a central glow, brighter than any of its predecessors, gathered to itself the whole attention of everybody. Its shape and meaning were for a few seconds uncertain. Then, clear and shining in each minutest detail, there burst on the spectators the likeness of a colossal crown. It remained for a second only—only long enough

to be distinguished by them—and then, as it faded, up from the very same spot a bouquet of rockets rose, so brilliant and numerous that the whole prospect was nothing but a vision of soaring fire. Then that too subsided; the dark sky had its own again; the shouts of the villagers hoarsely sank into silence, and the party on the ramparts returned regretfully to the drawing-room.

Regret, however, was almost directly banished. One distraction had ended only to make room for another. A pair of folding doors were already standing open, giving access to a small saloon beyond; and Carew was already leading the way into it. Some of the younger men had instant visions of dancing; but very few moments sufficed to dispel these. The saloon, which in shape was circular, was not only small, but was more than half filled with a number of gilded chairs; and without delay or question the docile company seated themselves. They then perceived that facing them was a rich but faded curtain of pale blue brocade, festooned gracefully with tarnished gold tassels; and they were hardly settled into the first stage of expectancy, when a lively strain of music broke from an unseen orchestra; two footmen went round distributing programmes, and the curtain presently rose, disclosing a small stage, on which a *troupe* of really excellent artists, from Nice, gave a representation of Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.

Every one present had a delightful sense of the malicious applicability of the play to our own times, and the actors met with an applause even beyond what they themselves could account for. After the performance, some of the spectators mounted on the stage out of curiosity. Amongst the last to do so was Miss Consuelo Burton, and she still chanced to be standing there after the others had descended. The footlights shone on her delicate white dress and her bunches of scarlet berries. She made, as she stood there, with her dark eyes glittering, a beautiful but unconscious picture. Almost immediately the young Frenchman, who had been so voluble and attentive to her before, joined her

at one bound, and, placing himself beside her, called out to Carew, 'Come, let us have some *tableaux*. Mademoiselle Burton shall be the Maid of Orleans, and the *Princesse*, Agnes Sorel.' Miss Consuelo Burton at first turned and stared at him with an expression of tranquil and yet half-contemptuous wonder; and then, with a smile just sufficient for civility, dropped her eyes, and quietly stepped down again amongst the spectators.

'Ah,' said the Princess, with a clear metallic laugh, to the Frenchman, 'you will not, *mon cher*, have any *tableaux* to-night.'

'We have seen,' said Lord Aiden, in a murmur to Lady Mangotsfield, 'many interesting and many charming things; but Miss Consuelo Burton is the most charming and interesting of them all, and embodies as much as any of them the best of what the world is losing. There's enough high breeding in the mere way in which she carries her head to turn the blood of a whole Radical meeting into gall.'

'I don't,' said Lady Mangotsfield, 'think much of that young *vicomte*. His father was a gentleman, but his mother was a notary's daughter. Consuelo don't like him either. Of course one could see that; but she shows her dislike without any blushing or *gaucherie*.'

CHAPTER III.

PRESENT AND PAST.

THE following morning, till close upon midday, quiet possessed the château, but about that time the bustle of life began again; and by half past twelve the whole of the distinguished company, from the youngest Frenchman to the oldest of the *abbés* and *duchesses*, with all the English party, except Lady Mangotsfield, were gathered together in a voluble circle round the breakfast-table. The French contingent had come for the night only, and were to start for

Cannes betimes in the afternoon. Having celebrated last night their attachment to the Monarchical cause, to-night they were most of them about to forget the Republic at a fancy ball given by a charming American. It was therefore important to them, to the younger men especially, that they should be back in time for a final inspection of their dresses ; and their carriages accordingly were to be ready for them as soon as breakfast was over.

At the last moment, however, Carew had a parting surprise for them. He and his English friends would accompany them half the way, and arrangements had been made for tea in a certain forest, at a beautiful spot which lay not far from the road. Secretly one or two were a little uneasy at the delay ; but on reaching the spot in question, they felt well repaid for their patience. Every preparation, they found, had been made already. In a green glade there was pitched a pretty pavilion, gaily fluttering with pink bows and ribands, and above it, moving on a lazily moving flag, they once more beheld the royal lilies of France. The grass in front was spread with scarlet blankets ; a little fire made a blue smoke in the background ; cups of tea and chocolate were presently handed round, with cakes and sweetmeats piled up in wicker baskets. Nor was this all ; for three boy musicians—one fiddler, and two who performed on clarinets—emerged from behind the pavilion as soon as the company were seated, and played a succession of touching and simple airs with a sweetness and feeling that charmed even the most fastidious.

‘Watteau,’ said Mrs. Harley to Carew, when the French guests had departed, and the others, in a large wagonette, were on their way back to the château—‘Watteau himself never painted a scene of more delightful and of more unreal simplicity. But it is impossible to tell you at once all I think of your entertainment. It must dribble out bit by bit.’

‘Well,’ said Carew, ‘you may speak your mind quite freely. The entertainment was not mine, it was really my

cousin Gaston's. He pays for it. He has something like it every year, only it happened that this time it fell to my lot to manage it. What brought me to Nice the other day, when I first met you, was something I had to settle with the actors and the firework man. However, it's all finished now except the pleasantest part of it, and that is the talking it over amongst ourselves this evening.'

'Nothing,' said Lord Aiden, 'is so depressing as to be left with oneself by one's friends; nothing is so charming as to be left with one's friends by one's acquaintances.'

'And,' said Carew, 'even to-night we shall not be without an excitement. Not only shall we see Lady Mangotsfield, who has been keeping her room all day, but there is to be another arrival, whom I hope you have not forgotten.'

'Who?' said Mrs. Harley.

'Surely,' said Carew, 'I told you. No less a person than Lady Chislehurst.'

At the mention of this name Mr. Stanley's eye lit up for an instant with a faint twinkle of humour. 'That,' he said, 'will indeed be a treat for all of us.' And his tone was one of sincerity, just touched with genial sarcasm.

Now Lady Chislehurst was nothing if not Catholic. Her zeal was a proverb; her name was international property; and Mrs. Harley, who had caught the priest's expression, felt him at once rise many degrees in her estimation. She herself, too, had been reminded of a treat awaiting her, which perhaps she regarded with a temper akin to his—the company of Lady Mangotsfield, and most likely a lecture from her. They had returned to the château, however, and were assembled for dinner; dinner at last was announced, and the dining-room door flung open; yet neither Lady Mangotsfield nor Lady Chislehurst had put in an appearance. Mrs. Harley was conscious of two distinct sensations—one of relief, the other of disappointment; when Carew, as he gave his arm to her, at once cured her

of both. 'Lady Mangotsfield,' he said, 'will not come down till afterwards, and Lady Chislehurst, who has only just arrived, sent a special message to beg that we would not wait for her.'

The table, in spite of the diminished size of the party, was, in the matter of plate and china, as interesting as it had been yesterday.

'What a magnificent fellow,' said Harley, 'Carew's cousin is! This château of his must be a complete museum.'

Lord Aiden, who again had been fascinated by the Sèvres china, looked up, and said with a look of dreamy wonder, 'Do you mean to say that he gives you *carte blanche* to use all this?'

'It is hard to tell you,' said Carew, 'where my *carte blanche* ends. Look at this table; look at these lights, these servants; think of the whole of this large house kept going. I pay for the food we eat certainly; but everything else is done by my cousin Gaston; and as for yesterday, Gaston paid for the food too—actors, dinner, fireworks, fiddlers, all. When I tell it you first it sounds just like a fairy-tale; but the real history of it is this. Gaston is a widower, and is childless. He had two children once; but they both died here of diphtheria, and since that time he has never revisited the place. But it is the oldest possession of his family. It is, moreover, one of the very few châteaux that were practically untouched by the Revolution. The old life has gone on without a break in it, and though he himself may never again inhabit it, he means that the full household shall be still maintained to the last. He used to keep a white horse in the stables, on which he hoped that the King would one day ride into Paris. For four or five winters he has lent this house to his mother-in-law, but this year she is gone to Madeira, and knowing I was coming south, he was good enough to offer it to me.'

'But what do you mean,' said Mrs. Harley, 'by the household being maintained to the last? And what is this *last* which you speak of in so melancholy a manner?'

‘The family,’ said Carew, ‘were so popular in this neighbourhood that during the Revolution their house was hardly injured ; but that which escaped the violence of the Revolution will perish in the next generation under the blight of the *Code Napoléon*. The estate will be divided, and this place will be sold.’

‘Mr. Carew, I am so glad that you did not wait for me !’ The voice that uttered the words was like a clear ripple of music, with a rustle of silk for a soft but rapid accompaniment ; and all were at once aware of the advent of Lady Chislehurst. Her handsome face wore its most benignant of smiles ; the very sound of her dress seemed somehow an ecclesiastical benediction, and her eyes were like the sun : they shone on the just and unjust. She called Miss Consuelo ‘her darling’ ; she asked her how were Elfrida and Mildred ; and, taking the seat left for her by the side of Mr. Stanley, slipped into his hand a letter, which, she said, she had been keeping to show him. ‘I want you,’ she murmured, ‘to see there the account of the Holy Father.’ Then with a brisker and more mundane accent, ‘I knew,’ she said, ‘I should be late ; and it turns out that I am even later than I thought I should be. The fact is, Mr. Carew, I found out that you have a chapel here, and there has been no mass said in it for over seven years. You must allow me to-morrow to do something to the altar ; and, if it can be managed, to have my Mass there on Sunday. Mr. Stanley and I will talk about that—won’t we ?’

Carew could not help glancing across the table to Miss Consuelo, and she acknowledged a community of thought by a little momentary *moue*. The Church, however, having had its share of attention, Lady Chislehurst now turned to the world ; and no one certainly gave to general conversation an easier flow or a more varied interest than she. She had thought much, she had read much, she had seen much of life. She had sought, and she had made, the acquaintance of nearly every one to whom she saw any chance of being either a friend or benefactress, and she thus had a

wide experience of all ranks except the middle. The gossip of Mayfair and the wants of the crowded alley—she thought most of the last, but she was equally familiar with both. If she could be said in society to have any fault at all, it was a slight tendency to group her ideas round one out of two centres—herself or the Catholic Church. And yet, if she sometimes irritated as well as amused her friends, she could say of them truly what can be said truly by few: none of them whenever she was present could bring themselves to desire her absence.

Certainly to-night at dinner no one was even tempted to do so—not even Mrs. Harley, though her back did go up for a moment, when she heard what to her was a respectable but indifferent superstition talked of as ‘The Faith,’ without a single word of apology. That, however, went for nothing; and putting that aside, there was but one other jar on the religious feelings of anybody; and this was experienced by Lady Chislehurst herself. It, too, was slight, and it was occasioned merely by the thought that in the drawing-room she was presently to encounter Lady Mangotsfield. As a great lady, Lady Mangotsfield commanded her highest opinion; but Lady Mangotsfield was the most unbending of Protestants, and her embodiment of pure Christianity was a Prince Bishop of Durham. Lady Chislehurst, however, was not in a mood to be ruffled. Two words were enough to express and relieve her feelings. Smiling her sweetest, she whispered to Mr. Stanley, ‘Old cat!’ and she then went on eating her dinner, prepared for, and resigned to, the situation.

She had every reason to be in a good humour; for she at once gave to the party a life that before was wanting. She was beset with questions as to public feeling at home, the preparations for the impending elections, and the prospects of the various candidates. She had only left England five or six days ago, so she had much to say that was not by this time old. The week before last she had been in the East End of London, and had found herself in the middle

of a mob of Social Democrats. They had just been listening, she said, to one of their newest leaders—a soured unsuccessful man, once an officer in the army, who had been suggesting, amongst shouts of applause, as the most useful measure for themselves, that they should cut the throats of every one who was rich enough to pay income-tax. What would have happened to her she was quite unable to tell, if three men, each of whom she had tended during an illness, had not suddenly appeared, and secured an escape for her carriage. On the evening of the same day she had dined with the Liberal Prime Minister, who, though aware of misery as a permanent factor in politics, had not been informed that at the present moment it had any detailed existence anywhere out of Ireland. A day or two later she had been in one of the Midland counties, canvassing rural voters on behalf of her Tory nephew; and the last few days she had devoted to going to church from the most dignified mansion in the whole Faubourg Saint Germain.

This last piece of news at once turned the conversation to the previous night's festivities, and all that Lady Chislehurst had lost. Lady Chislehurst already knew she had lost something; but she had not realised how much till now. On hearing the names of the French ladies who had been present, she found that she had known all the eldest ones from her infancy. It even appeared she had received presents from all of them, beginning with a rattle and ending with a book of devotions. Then Lord Aiden, in a tone of indolent despondency, returned to the subject they had been speaking of when Lady Chislehurst entered, and informed her of the fate that was hanging over the château. 'You see,' he said, 'what it is that France is coming to.'

Lady Chislehurst's mind was sufficiently full of forebodings to make her listen to this with an almost emulous sadness. 'Yes,' she said, 'and it is just the same in England. The châteaux there have the same future before them. No, Mrs. Harley, I assure you you need not laugh.

One could hardly have imagined, till the approach of the election has showed it, how far the influence of the country gentlemen has declined. In my nephew's county—the place I have just been in—who should you think the Liberal candidates are? An architect is one, if you please; and some nobody from the Stock Exchange is another. I have not seen either of them; but one can quite imagine the sort of thing—men whose public programme is to abolish the Lords, and whose private programme is to dine with them.'

Mrs. Harley, with a face half sad and half smiling, said: 'As for the châteaux, I fear that their days are numbered.'

Carew was determined that nothing should go without a fight for it, and Lord Aiden wondered whether anything were left worth fighting for.

Harley, who was by far the most cheerful person present, believed that of existing institutions two at least would be permanent. These were the institutions of property and marriage. Everything else, he thought, was rapidly decomposing. 'Still,' he added, addressing himself to Lord Aiden, 'the territorial classes might last a good bit longer, if they would only wake up a bit and appeal more to the people.'

'Yes,' Lord Aiden replied, 'and a weary work that would be.'

'My dear Lord Aiden,' said Lady Chislehurst winningly, 'there's only one thing can save us, and that is the Church. I sometimes think that the Church is the only thing that will be saved. Mr. Stanley, tell me, do you agree with me?'

Mr. Stanley looked gravely at her. 'Any institution may be saved,' he said, 'which has not lost the power of adapting itself.'

'And yet,' said Harley, casting his eyes about him, 'what could adapt itself better than this château to all the demands of our simple modern luxury? And all the same, you tell us that we shall not save this château.'

‘Let us hope,’ said Lady Chislehurst, ‘if it must go out of the family, that it will be bought as it stands by some one who will take care of it.’

‘It could be bought as it stands,’ said Carew, ‘by no one except a millionaire. Indeed, I am not sure that I would not sooner think of it as a ruin than as furnished up and inhabited by some rich Radical *bourgeois*.’

‘That,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘is a sentiment worthy of Lady Mangotsfield.’

‘Lady Mangotsfield,’ said Carew, evading this piece of the criticism, ‘at all events is perfectly happy. She is having her dinner in a room that was occupied by Charles the Fifth, and her bed, which, in grandeur, is quite as good as a throne, has been aired for her by Francis the First, who slept, I am told, three weeks in it.’

‘And so,’ said Lord Aiden presently, ‘a few years more, a very few years, and our present surroundings will be all a dream of the past—everything scattered to the four winds of heaven. Well, this château is only an illustration of what we have just been saying. It is very much like the world in which we have been brought up from our childhood—our world, I mean—the world of us who are here now. It is not gone ; but it is going : as,’ he added with a laugh, ‘the auctioneer will be saying about this beautiful china some day.’

‘Our world,’ said Carew, ‘will, you think, be knocked down as this china will. It may be knocked down, but it will be handed over to nobody.’

He had hardly done speaking when a grave and majestic footman, his hair snowy with powder, who had not waited at dinner, approached Carew deferentially, and murmured a few words to him. Carew turned to his guests, and, smiling, explained the message.

‘Lady Mangotsfield,’ he said, ‘has just come down. Let us keep up our French habits, and all of us go in to her together.’ During the general movement, for a second or two Miss Consuelo Burton was next to him. ‘I am glad,’

he said to her, 'that you have again got your red berries on. I picked them myself, both yesterday and again this evening, and I gave orders that they should be taken to your room. You wore berries like that—perhaps you may not remember it—the last evening I ever saw you in London.'

CHAPTER IV.

THE PAST JUDGES THE PRESENT.

To a hasty glance that had not learned to discriminate, Lady Mangotsfield might have passed for the meekest of living women. The party from the dining-room found her smiling placidly in the hardest and uneasiest of all the chairs available. Her black silk dress, which was the same she had worn last night, was dowdy and put on with negligence; what shape it had was obscured by a yet dowdier shawl; and her long hands, crossed on her lap before her, were covered with wrinkled gloves that had only been half drawn on. But the real meaning of her toilette was the very reverse of what it seemed to be. It expressed not her estimate of herself as compared with the world at large, but her estimate of the world at large as compared with her: and the placid smile, when studied a little longer, seemed less that of a person disposed to notice everybody, than of one who had been accustomed only to people fit to be noticed.

With the present company she was luckily quite satisfied—even with Mr. Stanley, having found out who was his father. In a general way too, it appeared, she had been pleased with the party of last night; and she began almost directly to make Carew a number of pretty speeches about the way in which he had managed the entertainment.

'I had often heard,' she said, 'from old Madame de Courbon-Loubet, of all the fine doings which your cousin

still kept up here ; and so when I learnt it was you who were at the château this winter—and I only learnt it by the merest accident from a stranger—I sent you a note at once and said I was coming to see you. I've been writing this morning to your poor dear Uncle Horace, telling him all about it. He gets out very little ; and any bit of news amuses him. By the way,' she added, 'you made one mistake, you shouldn't have invited that woman—I always forget her name——'

'Who?' said Carew, though he knew quite well what was coming.

'That woman with all the diamonds—that princess—that banker's daughter. It don't do. She don't mix with the others.'

'I know,' said Carew, 'that they don't exactly like her ; but at least they visit her ; and I couldn't avoid asking her. Besides, our party was to celebrate a Royal birthday, and who has been admired by so many Royalties as she?'

'Yes,' said Lady Mangotsfield, with an odd little low laugh ; 'the Royalties can do what they like. That's just what we can't.' Then somewhat abruptly turning to Mrs. Harley, 'Well, my dear,' she went on, 'and what have you been about lately? Last night I had hardly a moment to talk to you. Have you been having any more of those dreadful men of genius to your parties?'

Mischief at once lightened in Mrs. Harley's eyes.

'Our last dinner, Lady Mangotsfield, before we left London, was given,' she said, 'in honour of Mr. Snapper.'

The shot told to perfection. Lady Mangotsfield moved back her chair with a genuine start of horror.

'You don't mean to say,' she exclaimed, 'you have actually asked him?' Then, as if horror were a feeling far too flattering, she lowered the offence to the level of an ill-judged joke ; and, shaking her fan at Mrs. Harley with a tremulous air of reprimand, 'If you do that again,' she said, 'I can tell you I wash my hands of you.'

That matter being settled, she turned now to Lord

Aiden, and was understood to ask him if he did not agree with her that it was 'really too bad' that such a man as Mr. Snapper was 'in existence,' meaning by *existence* his being obtruded within the sphere of her notice. Lord Aiden agreed that it was. 'Nothing,' he said, 'is now what it used to be. Twenty years back such a man would have had no chance.'

'Of course,' resumed Lady Mangotsfield, 'we all know what *their* object is. Their one object is to abolish primogeniture; and if ever they do that, it will of course be the ruin of England.'

Every one hung on her clear but faltering accents, if not with conviction, at all events with curiosity, and waited for her to confide to Lord Aiden her further views of the situation. It appeared, as she went on, that it made her angry rather than apprehensive. What is commonly spoken of as the growing power of democracy, she seemed to regard as an outburst of passing popular naughtiness. The people, in her eyes, was a child with a fit on it of impertinence and perversity; and the best punishment its natural leaders could inflict on it was not to notice it till it had grown obedient and good again. Real political life was still confined to the old families; and political knowledge, as much as herds of deer, was secluded in the precincts of country gentlemen's parks. Lord Aiden, as he listened to her, had a quiet cynical smile; but, all the same, he listened with obvious sympathy. He inclined to her view of things much as he inclined to Catholicism. It was not true; but no other view was tolerable.

'By the way,' said Carew to Lady Mangotsfield, as soon as she had finished her politics, 'you said just now you heard of my being here from a stranger. May we know who the stranger was?'

'That,' said Lady Mangotsfield, 'is the very point on which you must enlighten me. You know him quite well. He assured me he was a great friend of yours. His name—what was his name, now? Upon my word I can't

recollect it. It was not one that conveyed any idea to my mind.'

'Who,' said Carew, 'introduced him to you?'

'Who introduced him to me? Why, oddly enough, Stonehouse did. I was sitting in my carriage at the band, and Stonehouse had just left me, when I saw this gentleman go suddenly up and whisper to him; and then after a moment or two, Stonehouse came back to the carriage again, and in his queer little precise voice—so like in that he is to his dear father—"Aunt Hilda," he said, "will you allow me to introduce to you a——" ah, I have it now—"will you allow me to introduce to you a Mr. Inigo, who is dying to pay his respects to you? You'd better know him. I think he'll very likely amuse you." I suppose—I don't know—but I suppose, that I drew back a little; for Stonehouse said, "You needn't be frightened of him. I assure you he won't bite." He's always so droll, is Stonehouse. Well, the long and short of it was, this Inigo was brought up to me, and before I knew where I was, he was telling me some long story about the Grand Duke, and how anxious he was to see me. God bless the man, I thought, I didn't want to be told that. I had been with the Grand Duke nearly all the morning already. However, that's not the point. The point is that I heard you were here from Mr. Inigo: and now I want you to tell me, if you can, who this Mr. Inigo is.'

'How like Stonehouse!' exclaimed Miss Consuelo Burton, who, though rather in awe of Lady Mangotsfield, was overcome by her sense of amusement. 'He played just the same trick on us.'

'What, my dear?' said Lady Mangotsfield sharply. 'Lord Aiden, what was it this young lady said?'

'Stonehouse,' said Miss Consuelo, 'finds Mr. Inigo rather an affliction; and he thinks it a joke sometimes to introduce him to other people.'

Lady Mangotsfield reflected for a moment on who Stonehouse was—her own nephew, and his father's eldest

son ; so she decided on being slightly amused, and said, 'It was very naughty of him. But come—you have none of you yet told me who the gentleman is. Is he a gentleman? That's what I want to get at.'

'I,' said Carew, 'have an exceedingly slight acquaintance with him, but he's become lately a sort of gentleman-in-waiting to my Uncle Horace, who is less fastidious than he used to be, as his sight and hearing are failing him, and who finds Mr. Inigo useful to play whist with him, and even on occasions to write out invitations to dinner.'

'Well, Evelyn,' said Lady Mangotsfield to Mrs. Harley, 'and what do you say of this wonder?'

'He's far too fashionable,' said Mrs. Harley, 'for me to be intimate with ; so I, for one, can hardly venture on an opinion.'

'Nonsense, my dear,' said Lady Mangotsfield ; 'how can you say such a thing? The man's not fashionable, else I should have heard of him. But you all seem to know him. Has he any position of his own?'

'Yes,' said Harley, 'he certainly has *one*. His position is at the top of every staircase in London he can get to.'

'And,' said Carew, 'if you don't think that makes him a gentleman, I can only say that your opinion is very different from his.'

Lady Mangotsfield could appreciate many things, but not a tone of banter when it happened to be addressed to herself. 'Our friend here,' she said, turning again to Mrs. Harley, 'should not talk about things which he does not understand. I can only say that if this Mr. Inigo is the fashion, fashion is very much changed from the thing that it was in my day. Besides, even in my day this was always true—the men who were seen everywhere were the men who were sought for nowhere. And you, Consuelo—when you're going about to your parties—I'll tell you one thing, and remember an old woman told it to you—when a man of fashion is not a gentleman, there is no one in the world so vulgar as a man of fashion.'

CHAPTER V.

THE RIDDLE OF LIFE BY MOONLIGHT.

No sooner had Lady Mangotsfield retired, which she did before any of the others showed any symptoms of weariness, than Carew went to one of the windows, and looked out at the night. The curtains, as he drew them aside, let in a flood of moonlight. Then with permission he threw the window open ; and the moonlight was followed by a warm fresh odour of orange-blossoms. By this time the others were all standing close to him ; and the vision that met their eyes was so alluring and brilliant that hats and cloaks were sent for, and they all of them went outside.

Right below the window was the old moat of the château, with a little bridge crossing it to the broad ramparts beyond. The moat was nothing now but a sunken cincture of orange trees ; and the ramparts had been turned into a terrace from which the whole landscape was visible. To this terrace they passed. They had stood there the night before, and the same hills fronted them that had been alive with fiery flowers and fountains. But the moon then had been hidden behind a thick bank of clouds ; everything near and far had been lost or blurred in obscurity, and their minds and eyes had been occupied almost exclusively by the numbers of people, and the bewildering blaze of the fireworks. Now everything looked so wholly different that they could hardly believe it was really the same scene ; and for a time they were almost silent before its fantastic beauty.

The sides of the tall tower, as it rose soaring and solitary, had a strange gleam on them, and showed traces of Moorish ornament. By common consent they all moved slowly towards it. Around its base, and again below the ramparts, the tops of unfamiliar palm-trees made feathery arches in the air, as though they were exotics which grew here in some magic summer. Mysterious gardens, too, which none of the guests had visited, were now seen to descend all that

side of the hill ; and here and there, as peering eyes looked down on them, far in the depths was a white glimmer of flowers, or a winding gravel walk, that shone like a thread of silver ; whilst farther away the mountains, woods, and villages, the terraced olive yards, and the keen crags above them, were at once so clear and faint, at once so brilliant and so shadowy, that they looked less like a real landscape than a reflection in a sorcerer's mirror.

'Why should we walk?' said Lady Chislehurst, presently. 'We are all wrapped up. There are seats. What does every one say to sitting down?'

The suggestion proved welcome, and the group settled themselves pensively.

'Thank God,' murmured Lord Aiden at last, 'we can forget politics here.'

Lady Chislehurst looked at him with an expression of motherly sadness. 'My dear Lord Aiden,' she said, 'if I may make a personal speech, it's a pity that you ever took to politics at all. The world would have gained if you had never deserted poetry.'

There were many reasons why, as uttered by her, these few words had a special effect on her hearers, and came to them charged with the weight of many associations. Lady Chislehurst, it was known, had had her own private history ; through the breath of scandal having never presumed to touch her, it had always remained for the world a respectful and vague conjecture. In early life she had possessed uncommon attraction ; and she had enjoyed the credit of having broken numerous hearts, without the discredit of having ever designed to do so ; but, though she had twice made a devoted and blameless wife, having found herself at forty for a second time a widow, there was still a legend about her that, in the breaking of hearts and the mending of them, one alone had been broken really ; and that one was hers. It has been said that she had read much. She had also written something. She was known to have been the authoress of an anonymous volume of poems, of which George Sand had

said in her old age that it recalled to her the saddest and the purest feelings of her youth ; and many observers of Lady Chislehurst's sympathy with sorrow were convinced that she could only have learnt it from sorrow and desolation of her own.

Lord Aiden was fully aware of the character of the woman who had spoken to him ; and by no means the sort of man, under ordinary circumstances, to submit to a reproach or even advice in public, he replied to Lady Chislehurst with a frank and reflective simplicity, which might have been almost called humble had it been a little less indolent.

'I,' he said, 'didn't desert my poetry. Quite the contrary : my poetry has deserted me. Even if I had not lost the ability, I have lost the impulse to write.'

'And doesn't it,' said Miss Consuelo Burton, 'come back to you on a night like this?'

Lord Aiden was touched by the interest in the girl's luminous eyes. 'The impulse,' he answered, 'to think poetry may come back, but the impulse to write it, never. I suppose,' he went on, in a more cynical tone, 'that we may venture to admit, in Lady Mangotsfield's absence, that in more ways than one this *is* a democratic age : and what has silenced me is the growth of the reading public. The sense of private life is completely taken away from one ; and to write poetry now would be much the same, to my mind, as discussing one's private affairs at a *table d'hôte* or in a railway carriage.'

'Besides that,' said Harley, with his usual geniality, 'the world, or at least civilisations, when they grow to a certain age, lose their voices, as men do. Europe is too old for poetry ; America is too young.'

'No, no,' said Lady Chislehurst, 'it is not the age of Europe that is the matter with us. My dear Mr. Harley, the world is old enough, but to each new heart it is still as young as ever. The first time that a girl loves, to-day, love is as fresh to her as it was to Eve in Eden.'

'Yes,' said Carew, 'there are many things in life—many

things and thoughts, let them be never so often talked about, which, until we have learnt to realise them, are as strange and unknown as death.'

'You, Lord Aiden,' said Mrs. Harley after a pause, 'once wrote a poem in which you said something just like that. You said—do you remember?—that "Death was as strange as love."'

'Did I?' he said, with a little contemptuous laugh, common to poets when their own works are alluded to. 'I believe I did, now that you come to remind me of it. I forget the name of the critic who once pointed out that nearly every simile had the makings in it of two: and that, like a coat, if you turned it, you could make a new one.'

'Yes,' said Carew, 'and often one just as good. The other day, I was driving along the Corniche road, and there constantly kept recurring to me a line or a phrase of Tennyson, in which he describes the very waters that were under me as "bays, the peacock's neck in hue." No simile could be more perfect or beautiful; but if you wished to describe a peacock, it would be just as perfect inverted; and you might say that the peacock's neck was the colour of a Mediterranean bay.'

'That,' said Mr. Stanley, 'is perfectly true; and the simile helps the imagination as much in one case as in the other. It's an odd thing, but it is so.'

'I think,' said Lord Aiden, growing gradually more animated—'I think that the explanation of it is this. The mind at rest is full of vivid images, which have settled on it everywhere like a flock of brilliant and quick-eyed birds; but the moment we approach any one of them, and set about examining it carefully, its wings are spread, and with one flash it is gone. But when we employ a simile to illustrate anything, the thing which we want to illustrate acts as a kind of stalking-horse, and the image which is to illustrate it is caught before it knew we were near it.'

'My dear Lord Aiden,' exclaimed Lady Chislehurst, 'you are still a poet at heart. As you were speaking this

last moment, one would have thought you were your old self again. Do you remember at Vienna, many years ago, one pleasant night when you recited one of your poems to us? Recite us one now, if you never mean more to publish any. Do ; and let me live over old times again.'

'Ask Carew,' said Lord Aiden ; 'he's a better poet than I am ; and a wiser one, too, for he never published at all.'

'Come, Mr. Carew,' said Lady Chislehurst. 'Doesn't this scene inspire you?'

'This scene,' said Carew, 'or this country, is the only thing that for many years past ever *has* inspired me. Would you really like to hear me repeat something? I will if you like—not because the verses are good, but because I mean what is said in them so much that I find a pleasure in re-saying it. One person here, however, knows them only too well already. I wrote them for Mrs. Harley, when she set up an album, and asked me to contribute something—which she was good enough to call poetry. They are headed "Lines to the Riviera."'

'We are listening,' said Lady Chislehurst.

Carew repeated as follows :—

*Ah, what ailed you to bid rhyme for you
me—me who have done with rhyme?
Would you ask of a tree figs when you
know well it is past the time?
See the lute that I breathed love to! It
hangs now on a broken string,
One song only of all songs have I
now courage or heart to sing,
Oh, my luminous land, glowing with
blue under and blue above!
Land whose violets breathe sweeter than
all mouths that have murmur'd love!
Oh, my land of the palm, olive, and
aloe! land of the sun, the sea!
Still my heart is a child's, turning in
long longing to thee, to thee!*

Carew was sitting next to Miss Consuelo Burton, and the

consciousness that she was listening gave a depth and feeling to his intonation, which endowed the verses with a merit which was possibly not their own. After they had been accorded a fitting acknowledgment, Lord Aiden was again beset by Lady Chislehurst with entreaties that he would follow Carew's good example, and give them something, if only a few lines, of his own. This time he proved to be more open to persuasion. A sense of intimacy gradually had sprung up amongst them all. A tone now seemed natural that half an hour ago would have been singular, and Lord Aiden yielded to the spirit of the moonlight and the moment.

'Here,' he said, 'is the last thing I have written. It is not published, and it will not be. Like Carew's, it was written in answer to a friend's request, who was good enough some time since to wish to have my autograph—a gifted and beautiful woman,' he went on, speaking into the collar of his coat, and brushing some cigarette ash off the fur of it, 'who was suffering from the most unfeminine of all our modern maladies—a want of belief in any further existence. What I wrote for her was this :—

*Far in a doubtful world I place my treasure,
And in this near world you :
But will you find that your world gives you pleasure?
Or I, that mine is true?*

'My dear Lord Aiden,' said Lady Chislehurst presently, 'shall I tell you why your Muse has deserted you?' and she smiled at him with a look of benignant—of almost condescending interest. 'It is because you have lost faith. That is the simple reason. You can't sing of your treasure unless you are certain that your treasure exists.'

'Surely,' said Miss Consuelo, with a slight sense of perversity, 'men did so in the days of the Renaissance.'

'Their case,' interposed Carew, 'was very different to ours. They may have been doubtful, or even careless, about the old treasure; but their life was vivid with the illusion that they were finding a new one.'

‘I,’ murmured Miss Consuelo Burton half audibly, ‘have not——’

There she stopped short. Only Carew heard her. He looked round at her, and in a low tone asked, ‘What did you say?’

‘Nothing—nothing,’ she answered. Again he whispered, ‘Tell me.’ She paused for a moment, took one hasty glance at him, and then, in a voice lower than ever, spoke: ‘I was going to say that I had not even the comfort of the illusion.’

‘You, Mr. Carew,’ Lady Chislehurst was meanwhile proceeding—‘you, I know, are on my side. You agree with me, don’t you, in what I have just told Lord Aiden?’

‘My dear Lady—my dear friend,’ said Lord Aiden, ‘we agree with you one and all of us. Apart from religion, I can conceive of no good in life; and of only one evil—I mean democratic progress. But we none of us have any religion—our want is precisely that.’

‘I think,’ said Mr. Stanley, with an odd half-humorous smile—‘I think, Lord Aiden, your generalisation is a little too sweeping. You forget that three of us here to-night are Catholics.’

‘And Mr. and Mrs. Harley,’ said Lady Chislehurst, ‘are very excellent Protestants. I can only hope that I shall see them something better some day.’ Harley, on hearing this, laughed to himself somewhat, as Sarah did behind the tent door; but Lady Chislehurst, though angelic in many respects, could not hear like the angel; and continued quite unruffled: ‘There’s one thing,’ she said, ‘about which I am quite sure. If we all of us try to find the truth, we certainly shall find it; and if we all of us help each other, we shall find it still more quickly.’

Carew looked at her with an odd expression on his face, and then said abruptly, ‘Will you join my Society?’

‘What Society is that?’ said Lady Chislehurst with an inquiring softness.

‘A Society of people whose one link together is the wish to find the truth, as you say they are sure to find it.’ And

Carew proceeded to explain at sufficient length the project which already he had confided to Mrs. Harley. He was altogether surprised at the result of his communication. He was surprised at the quickness with which Lady Chislehurst grasped his idea, and the enthusiasm with which she entertained it. Even to his own mind, a moment ago it had been little more than a dream ; but now that it had been seized on by hers, it seemed suddenly to have become a reality.

‘Let us found your Society to-night,’ she said, ‘and let us join it one and all of us.’

Harley for a moment sounded a mild note of discord by observing that Lady Chislehurst could hardly be a seeker for truth, because, according to her own principles, she possessed it. But Mr. Stanley at once replied to this :—

‘I, at any rate, must claim to be numbered amongst the seekers. Faith is a compass, and the object of faith is fixed ; but human society is as unfixed as the sea. Winds affect it, mists obscure it, and it is crossed at times by currents which we call or miscall progress. Often, the more faith we put in the compass the more anxious shall we be as to how to sail and steer by it.’

‘In that way,’ said Mrs. Harley gravely, ‘I am sure we must all agree with you. Putting aside the religious beliefs which we do not share, I feel as fully as Mr. Stanley does the perplexities which we do share. Yes—I too am one of the seekers—I am one of those who require both help and knowledge.’

Miss Consuelo Burton drooped her head as she murmured, ‘Of whom I am chief.’

‘Well,’ said Lady Chislehurst, ‘let us consider that we have made a beginning, and before our party breaks up here we must make some arrangement with regard to our next meeting. I don’t know, I’m sure, what everybody’s plans may be, but I should suggest, let us meet at Rome at Easter. However, as to that, we have some days before us to think about it, and who knows meanwhile what conclusions we may not have come to. We shall expect our host,’ she

went on, with her most benignant smile at Carew—‘we shall expect our host to be a host indeed, and to give his ideas to us as well as his hospitality. He must tell us a little more how he himself approaches the problem.’

‘To-morrow,’ said Carew, ‘I shall perhaps be able to show you. Part of the secret is hidden in this château.’

CHAPTER VI.

THE RIDDLE OF LIFE BY DAYLIGHT.

LITTLE did the guests, as they took themselves off to bed, expect what the morrow was going to bring forth. Carew’s last words, indeed, had roused in them some slight expectation ; it had also been arranged that they should do what they had not done yet—go round the house and see all its curiosities thoroughly. But events were in store for them far more startling than these, and quite as startling to Carew himself as to anybody.

The morning, however, passed off calmly enough. This was spent in the promised tour of sight-seeing, which had been specially arranged in honour of Lady Mangotsfield, as that afternoon she meant to return to Nice. She found that the château even more than answered her expectations ; and, with one exception, she was in high good humour with everything. This exception was supplied by the chapel. But it was not the structure or the associations of the chapel itself that disturbed her : it was the sight of Lady Chislehurst’s maid, who was discovered in the act of arranging on the altar two tall silver candlesticks, taken from her mistress’s bedroom, whilst the floor at her feet was littered with leaves and flowers.

Carew, as the scene burst upon the party entering, observed how Miss Consuelo Burton glanced for a moment at Lady Chislehurst, first with a smile in her eyes, and then a half-contemptuous irritation. Lady Chislehurst, meanwhile, quite unconscious of this, was saying to Carew in her

sweetest and most beatified accents : 'How much nicer it looks now, doesn't it? I couldn't bear to think of its being left as I found it yesterday evening.' Lady Mangotsfield heard the words, and took in the whole situation perfectly ; but it was often her way, when she felt displeased at anything, to affect an extreme deafness ; and turning to Carew with a slight sharpness in her voice, 'What,' she said, 'have you got going on here? Is that young woman going to hang up a mistletoe bough?' Carew murmured an explanation, which contained the name of Lady Chislehurst. 'Oh,' said Lady Mangotsfield, raising her eyebrows, 'Lady Chislehurst !' That was her only answer. It was given in the mildest tone, and accompanied by the mildest smile, but the smile and the tone between them seemed somehow to fill the atmosphere with a delicate but unmistakable essence of politely pitying Protestantism. Lady Chislehurst was more conscious of this than any one. She was, however, quite equal to the occasion ; and her own pity, which rose at a moment's notice, was more than a match for that of her antagonist. 'Yes, dear Lady Mangotsfield,' she said, very much as if she were an angel instructing a child, 'there is going to be Mass said here to-morrow morning. To-morrow is Sunday, and a feast of one of the Church's saints.'

'Sunday, my dear !' retorted Lady Mangotsfield, 'yes, of course it's Sunday. As I always do when I'm at Nice, I shall go and hear Mr. Fothergill. Come, Mr. Carew, we'll look at the kitchens now.'

But it little availed her to cover her retreat thus. Lady Mangotsfield felt that Lady Chislehurst was the victor, and she was made to feel it again more than once afterwards. Lady Chislehurst, however, fought, when she did fight, simply and solely by the extra vigour of her sweetness. Her charity and her conversation became like a douche of balm, administered with a force just sufficient to make them sting.

'It strikes me,' said Lady Mangotsfield at luncheon, 'that you were all of you very late in getting to bed last night. What were you all doing?'

‘We were out on the terrace,’ said Lord Aiden, ‘talking and quoting poetry.’

‘We were doing more than that,’ said Lady Chislehurst, leaning graciously towards Lady Mangotsfield: ‘we were founding a Society.’

‘Eh? What?’ said Lady Mangotsfield, shielding herself again behind her buckler of deafness. ‘What does she say, Lord Aiden?’ Lord Aiden informed her. ‘Well,’ she continued, ‘and your Society, what is it to do, pray?’

‘Dear Lady Mangotsfield,’ said Lady Chislehurst, ‘it is to find, and to clear the way to, a recognition of a Catholic truth.’

‘It’s a Society, then, is it, to make you all turn Roman Catholics?’

‘If you like it, Lady Mangotsfield, we will drop the word *Catholic*, and call it merely a Society for the recognition of truth. It is going to be joined by many of the keenest intellects in London.’

Carew and his friends stared at Lady Chislehurst, nor did their wonder lessen as they listened to what followed. ‘We are going,’ she continued, ‘to have the Duke of Angmering with us, Lady Carlton, Lady St. George, the Cardinal, the Duke of Renfrew, and the Prime Minister—every one, in fact, whose opinions ought to be influential.’

‘Then, in that case,’ said Lady Mangotsfield, ‘your Society will be an exceedingly small one.’

‘Its members,’ said Lady Chislehurst, ‘are to have one qualification, at least, which you, dear Lady Mangotsfield, are quite sure to approve of. They are to be all of them ladies and gentlemen.’

This information, no doubt, was in itself conciliating, and several of the names just mentioned were those of personages Lady Mangotsfield held high in honour; but, at the same time, the Society, if it meant anything, must, she felt, be a species of Popish plot, and the very fact of its being talked of affected her as some affront to herself.

‘Well,’ she said, with an odd perversity of temper, ‘if

you mean your members to be all ladies and gentlemen, I should advise you as soon as possible to elect Mr.—what's his name—Mr. Inigo. I dare say I shall see him at Nice, and if so I shall tell him all about you all. Eh, John? What's this? How did this come?'

These last words were addressed to her footman, who had been standing behind her chair, with a silver tray in his hand, waiting for the first moment when he might venture to tender to her a letter.

'The post-chaise,' he said, 'has just come for your Ladyship, and this is a letter that was sent by Dr. Williamson.'

Dr. Williamson was Lady Mangotsfield's own doctor, who had lived in her house for the last twenty years, and generally travelled with her to attend to her health and to her travelling rugs. She glanced at the letter rapidly, and then, as if slightly disturbed by it, 'John,' she said, 'tell my maid to come to me. Let her go into the drawing-room. I will come in there to speak to her.'

She had hardly risen and reached the door, when Carew, who was holding it open for her, was addressed by a servant also, and for him too there was a tray with a missive lying upon it. Moreover, like Lady Mangotsfield, he seemed slightly disturbed by receiving it; and murmuring some excuse to his guests, he likewise left the dining-room.

'It's exactly,' said Lord Aiden, 'like a scene in a Greek play. First comes one messenger, then another. But, my dear Lady,' he added, turning to Lady Chislehurst, 'our Society, according to you, is far larger than we had any idea of.'

'I've no doubt,' said Lady Chislehurst, with the frankest smile imaginable—'I've no doubt that Henry Renfrew and all the others would join us. Nothing is wanting but for me to write and ask them; and even if we decide on keeping our Society to ourselves, it will have done Lady Mangotsfield good to hear what we just told her. It will have woke her up a little. She is,' Lady Chislehurst added,

pausing for a word, and almost making it classical by the apologetic hesitation which prefaced it—‘she is such an old stick-in-the-mud.’

A slight smile in a moment or two flickered on every lip, for Lady Mangotsfield almost directly returned again, and having called for some rice-pudding that had been specially made for her, informed the company that her departure had been put off till to-morrow, her doctor having forbidden her to drive when the wind was east. ‘And where’s our host?’ she said. ‘I must tell him he’ll have to keep me.’

Carew, however, did not return to the table, and in a very few minutes a message was brought from him to Mrs. Harley, begging that she would be good enough to go out and speak to him on the ramparts.

She at once rose, and hardly knowing what to expect she found him with all the air of a man in some great perplexity.

‘Do you remember,’ he exclaimed, as he went forward to meet her, ‘how I told you in my letter that I had perhaps a surprise in store for you?’

‘You did,’ she said. ‘But I thought we had had it already—your plays, your fireworks, your musicians, and your Legitimist duchesses.’

‘No, no,’ said Carew, ‘what I meant was something quite different. In a few hours’ time, who do you think will arrive here?’

There was something in his tone which made Mrs. Harley look at him anxiously. ‘I can’t conceive,’ she said. ‘I hope it’s no one very alarming. Tell me who is it?’

Carew kept her in suspense for a few moments, and then said, ‘Mr. Foreman.’

Astonishment, incredulity, and something nearly akin to consternation were visible on Mrs. Harley’s face.

‘Mr. Foreman!’ she echoed. ‘Never—you can’t possibly mean it!’

‘I do though,’ said Carew, ‘and I only wish I didn’t.’

The mine has exploded sooner than I intended. Listen a moment, and I'll tell you how it happened. For the last few years Foreman has known my name. Several of his statements I have exposed in the papers, and he and I, in that way, have had more than one passage-at-arms together. We have also exchanged one or two private letters. Well, as you know, I heard from you that he was at Nice ; and my first impulse when you told me so, putting aside his illness, would have been to kick him rather than seek his company. But several things were said that night which I thought over afterwards. I was struck by the interest which the mention of him and his views seemed to excite in our friend Miss Consuelo Burton ; and to make a long story short, the morning after I dined with you—in fact, just before I paid you my early visit—I had a little surreptitious interview with him, and hardly thinking that he would dream of accepting my invitation, I suggested that whilst you were with me he should come over and meet you here.'

'Indeed,' said Mrs. Harley, still aghast at the news. 'He said nothing about it to me. And did you tell him who else would be here?'

'If he did come,' said Carew, 'I suggested that his day should be Monday. Lady Chislehurst would by that time have been gone, and I never really looked on Miss Consuelo's presence as a possibility. But somehow or other, he can't have understood me properly, for a terrible telegram which has just arrived informs me that our gentleman will be with us this afternoon.'

Mrs. Harley looked down meditatively. 'It's an awkward thing, I admit,' she said ; and she tapped the gravel with the tip of a dainty boot.

'My great difficulty, you see,' said Carew, 'is this. What will be said to the meeting by Miss Consuelo's sisters by-and-by? And what will be said to it by Lady Chislehurst now? As for Aiden, it will amuse him ; and he will do his best to make things go smoothly.'

‘And Mr. Stanley?’ said Mrs. Harley.

‘He will be more than amused. If I know him at all, he will be interested. Indeed he is my chief hope. My fear is that Foreman may say something violent; that he may horrify Lady Chislehurst; and that in addition to a scene at the moment, she may make mischief afterwards. There they are at the window—Aiden and Lady Chislehurst both. If I could only catch his eye, I’d get him to come out and speak to us.’ He at last did what he wished to do, and Lord Aiden emerged. ‘My dear fellow,’ cried Carew, ‘for pity’s sake come and console me. I’ve a live Socialist coming here this afternoon—that animal Foreman who spouts revolution in the parks. Please support me by telling me that you don’t much mind meeting him.’

Lord Aiden for a second looked just a trifle annoyed; but he then said carelessly, ‘Not I—I shall like it. A little variety is always rather amusing. I believe, by the way, this is a person of some education.’

‘Dear, yes,’ said Mrs. Harley. ‘He was a Fellow of a College at Cambridge.’

‘Sec,’ said Carew, ‘here come all the others—Miss Consuelo, Frederic Stanley, and Lady Chislehurst. They’re not coming near us, but I had best call them. Now for it—I must break the news to her ladyship. You see us, Lady Chislehurst,’ he said, ‘in rather a troubled conclave. A guest is going to arrive whom I had not at all expected, and whom, I fancy, some of us may not like. I mean he’s a roughish man, not much used to society. He’s a man who spends his life in working amongst the East End poor. In fact,’ said Carew, taking courage as he proceeded, ‘you may possibly know his name, as the Cardinal takes an interest in him. His name is Foreman.’

Lady Chislehurst’s face beamed with inquiring graciousness. ‘No,’ she said, ‘I don’t think I can have heard of him. But any one who interests the Cardinal is sure to be worth meeting, even if he should be a little—well—not quite like ourselves.’ Suddenly, however, she seemed to

recollect something. 'He surely,' she said, 'can't have anything to do with that horrible man Foreman, who is the ringleader of the East End Socialists?'

Carew, in spite of his perplexity, could not help smiling at this. He turned to Mrs. Harley, and with the frankness of utter despair, he exclaimed aloud, 'Well, now, all the fat is in the fire!'

The suspense for a moment was dreadful, but help was almost immediate. 'I,' said Mr. Stanley, 'know the man's name well enough. Tell me, Carew: he's a disciple of Karl Marx, isn't he?'

'He is,' said Carew.

'Then, by all means,' said Mr. Stanley, 'let us welcome him. There's nobody in the world I should like better to have a talk with.'

In Lady Chislehurst's alarm there was a sudden and miraculous lull. Still, it was with anxiety, though anxiety tempered by faith, that she asked Mr. Stanley if Socialists were not of necessity Atheists; and added that, to judge of them from the mob she herself had encountered, they were the most sinister and desperate people she had ever seen in her life. Mr. Stanley, however, replied very coolly, 'That is probably why the Cardinal admires him for working amongst them. And as for religion, I take it the case is this: a Socialist may be a good Christian, though hardly a very sensible man. Still,' he added, turning to Lord Aiden, 'in mere point of argument, they have a great deal to say for themselves. Did you ever read Karl Marx's treatise on "Capital"? It is the profoundest piece of imperfect reasoning that I ever met with in my life; and my only wonder is that it has not made more heretics. I allude, Lady Chislehurst,' he added, with a smile, 'to economic heretics, not to theological ones.'

Carew seemed somewhat reassured by the turn which events had taken; but suddenly with a start, 'God bless my soul!' he exclaimed, 'I ought to be going in, and seeing something of Lady Mangotsfield.'

‘Oh,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘my husband is with her, amusing her.’

‘Yes,’ said Carew, ‘but she’ll be off, I suppose, presently; I must be going in and paying my last civilities to her.’

A moment’s silence settled on the group round him. Then Mrs. Harley said, ‘What! and you haven’t heard?’ in a voice that made him feel there was still some disaster in store for him. ‘I forgot,’ she went on; ‘of course you have not. Lady Mangotsfield has been asking for you, in order to let you know—that she can’t go to-day, and is obliged to stop till to-morrow.’

Carew was thunderstruck. ‘What!’ he stammered, ‘not go? Why can’t she?’

‘Her doctor,’ said Mrs. Harley, unable to repress a smile, ‘won’t allow her to travel in the east wind.’

Carew looked up with a blank expression of helplessness. ‘What’s to be done?’ he said. ‘What do you think will happen? Foreman and Lady Mangotsfield meeting at one table!—Will the world go on, or the sun ever shine after it? Why was this Socialist—why was he ever born! Or why am I not possessed of all the *droits* of a *seigneur*, that I might send some minion to meet him and have him scragged on the road?’

‘I have it!’ said Mrs. Harley, with a burst of unlooked-for cheerfulness. ‘Leave him to me, and I’ll manage him beautifully. When does he come, do you say? At any rate not till tea-time. Let me get at him before he sees Lady Mangotsfield, and I’ll engage that she finds him a delightful person.’

All looked at Mrs. Harley with eyes of relief and wonder. ‘Listen,’ she went on to Carew. ‘You proposed, I think, taking us for a drive this afternoon. Of course the dear old lady won’t come, and if Foreman arrives in our absence——’

‘That,’ said Carew, ‘will of course never do. I must

stop in, and tackle him the very moment he sets foot in the precincts.'

'No,' said Mrs. Harley, 'there is no occasion for that. Before we go out I will write him a letter, which your servants must give him before he sees anybody. Lady Mangotsfield, ten to one, will be in her own room; but even if they do meet, my letter will have made him harmless. Stay, my husband will not drive. He shall prepare Lady Mangotsfield. You may tell her that a Mr. Foreman is coming; and George shall manage the rest.'

Miss Consuelo Burton had listened to all this intently; and when by-and-by the carriages came for their drive—two carriages, which were a large barouche and a pony-cart—she found herself, by design or accident, in the latter, with Mr. Stanley. This arrangement was a slight disappointment to Carew, and often during the drive, he saw, with a glance of envy, with what animation and earnestness she was talking to her companion. But on going home the Fates were entirely kind to him. It seemed to suit every one that Miss Consuelo should be faithful to the pony-cart, and Carew, in the most natural way, changed places with Mr. Stanley.

'I little thought, Miss Burton,' he said presently—'I little thought, the other evening at Nice, that a few days later I should be driving you here, and still less that I should be on the point of welcoming Foreman as a visitor. Do you know this? it was partly the interest you expressed in him that made me think of asking him if he would come to me. Are you pleased at the thought of seeing him?'

'I am,' she said gravely, with downcast eyes. 'I have been talking about him to Mr. Stanley. Of the man himself I know nothing. It is his work and his views I care for.'

'He's a little uncouth, but perhaps you will not mind that.'

'No,' she said, laughing, 'I don't think I shall. He might drop his h's and not be dressed for dinner, and in all

probability I should not even notice it—at least it would make no matter to me.’

‘Well,’ said Carew, ‘he’s not quite so bad as that.’

‘I always feel,’ she went on, pursuing her own line of thought, ‘that any one can meet any one with ease, whatever their social distance, when they meet upon points that are of equal concern to both. In a relation like that it is absurd to feel any difference, as in any other it is to affect equality. Besides, if Mr. Foreman is a little rough, he will be all the more of a change from Lady Chislehurst.’

‘I saw,’ said Carew, ‘when we went into the chapel this morning, your look of amusement at the signs of Lady Chislehurst’s zeal. I was amused myself—I confess it; and yet—will you let me say it to you?—I was shocked at seeing that my amusement was shared by you. Yes,’ he went on, when he found that she did not speak; ‘by you, whose position is so far other than mine. I know I should feel, if that altar meant to me even a tithe of what it, of course, must mean to you, that no act of homage done to it, supposing it done sincerely, could be really ridiculous, no matter how ill-judged. Perhaps you would laugh at the dolls’ frocks and the tinsel that the Italian peasant delights to see on the Madonna. I don’t laugh; the tinsel to him is beautiful; and his doll is to me like a child’s half-articulate hymn. But perhaps it is natural that you should treat things as you do. Every one knows that man must live by food, but food is a jest to those who have never known famine.’

‘What!’ she exclaimed, ‘and am I altogether a riddle to you? I’m stupid, I know, whenever I try to explain myself; but still, with your cleverness, I thought you might have seen something. I can as little understand why you are not a Catholic as you can understand why I am not satisfied with Catholicism. There—did you hear that? There I go again, saying just what I don’t mean. I had better not talk at all, or else I shall give you scandal. Mr. Stanley knows my meaning—at least I think he does. But you—how shall I put it to you?’ She was silent for some

moments, and then she broke out abruptly, 'The world is changing, and the Church stands apart from the change.'

'What change?' said Carew.

'Oh, I don't know,' she said hurriedly. 'At least I can't describe it to you. It is the change we were talking of last night at dinner. I feel it. It is in the streets; it is everywhere. It must come, and we must take our part in it.'

'Well?' said Carew, as she was silent, though evidently still wishing to speak.

'And what,' she went on at last, with a sound like a stifled sob—'what has the Mass got to do with this? It might have so much, but at present it has nothing. It distracts us from our duty; it does not nerve us to follow it. What right have I to be listening to the singing of angels, when outside the chancel wall are the groans of the crowded alley? Often, often, often, when I have heard the organ playing, "Hang the organ!" I have thought; "let me listen to the crying of the children!" Think of this; it is a scene I shall always remember. I used once to go to lectures at the Royal Institution; and arriving one night at the door, I saw through a lower window two professors, discussing what apparently was a fossil. I see their faces now—grand intellectual faces, full of what I suppose it is right to call elevation. And just outside, only a few paces away from them, were two cabmen, quarrelling over a pot of beer. What two different worlds were there side by side; and what good did the higher do to the lower? Look at me—do you think I am worldly? Perhaps you don't; but I am. I am fond of dress, I am fond of gaiety, I am fond of admiration. I have everything in my nature that I ought not to have; and yet my one wish at one time was to enter a convent: I believe, too, that I had a vocation. But now,' she said, clasping her hands, and speaking with a nervous earnestness, 'I could never endure that. I shall never again feel, till I learn how to work for others, that it is more than solemn child's-play to be feathering my own spiritual nest.'

CHAPTER VII.

A MAN WITH A NEW ANSWER.

THE pony-cart reached the château before the large carriage ; and Carew, having exchanged a few words with the *concierge*, turned to Miss Consuelo Burton and said, 'The great prophet has come. Let us wait here for Mrs. Harley. I have sent for her husband, and before we meet Foreman it is absolutely necessary that we all hold a council.'

'I suppose,' said Miss Consuelo, who had recovered her usual spirits, 'he will not have hoofs and a tail. If I must confess the truth, I am beginning to get nervous.'

The others arrived presently ; and at almost the same moment Harley emerged from the house, with a smile of subdued amusement. His wife hurried up to him ; they had a brief consultation, and then, at Carew's request, the whole party, with all the feelings of conspirators, retired into a disused room facing that of the *concierge*.

'Well?' said Carew, and he paused, turning to the Harleys, as if to indicate that it was they who were looked to for instruction.

'Everything has happened,' said Mrs. Harley, 'just as I hoped it would. There is only one thing that we must remember to do, and that is to avoid certain subjects. Let us keep as clear as we can of property and the wrongs of the poor ; and if we must talk politics let it be party politics only. Foreman is an enthusiast, and, like most enthusiasts, he has a temper almost as bad as a naughty child's in a nursery. Social politics might bring us to grief in a moment. He might fire up at a phrase ; his eyes would roll and glitter, and we should have him exploding as if he were a packet of dynamite. But keep him on party politics, and all will go more than well.'

Every one saw that there was something else to come ; and after a slight pause Mrs. Harley went on again.

‘You will, I dare say, be amused and surprised to hear that Foreman at one time either was or thought he was a Conservative; and if he had not been snubbed by some of the understrappers of the party, he would have been prophesying the millennium in the capacity of a Conservative candidate. Well, on one point he is still as sound as ever, and that is his contempt for the Liberal, above all for the Radical party. Let us keep him on that, and his words will be music to Lady Mangotsfield. There is, however, one preliminary difficulty. He is not very polished and not very compromising in his ways, and Lady Mangotsfield would be wondering who this strange person was, and why he should be presuming to have any opinions at all. Now, it so happened that during his Conservative days he had several conversations on the labour question with Lord B——, and Lord B—— really listened to him with a great deal of attention. I have therefore got George, whilst we have been out driving, to recount and, so far as he could without imperilling his soul, to magnify this incident to Lady Mangotsfield; and the result is, that when she sees Foreman this evening she expects to meet some one, having an historical interest, as a specimen of Lord B——’s sagacity in detecting genius beneath an uncouth exterior.’

‘I told her, too,’ added Harley—‘and it is just as well to say that we have really not been obliged to go beyond the truth—I told her that Foreman’s chief and most bitter opponents, at the time when he was anxious to come forward as a candidate for Marylebone, were the big shopkeepers and the vestrymen. “Ah!” she said, “what a pity that things are changed! In the good times we might have easily found a borough for him.”’

‘And where is he now?’ said Carew.

‘In the room where the tea is,’ said Harley, ‘counting the tea-cups, and wondering who’s going to drink out of them.’

‘Listen!’ said Mrs. Harley; ‘whilst you are all of you getting your things off, I will go to him and stroke him the

right way a little. I told him in my note something of what we should expect of him ; and unless unhappily his temper should get the better of him, he has a certain sense of humour, and will fall in with our plans.'

She had not apparently indulged in any exaggerated promises ; and when the rest of the party—all except Lady Mangotsfield—met together again, about half an hour afterwards, they found that she and Carew had the Socialist tame in a chair, and were between them offering tea and cake to him. He was a man of perhaps forty, with a broad forehead and quick but genial eyes, and though there was a coarseness in the actual shape of his features, and a certain wildness in his bushy moustache and beard, his expression was intellectual and by no means without refinement. The only immediate sign of any divergence in him from common good-breeding was a certain easiness and want of deferent distance in his manner of acknowledging his introduction to the various strangers. For the rest, there was little to distinguish him from any average man who, without many social advantages, had been brought up at a university. There was little, and yet there was one thing. This was a certain air as if he were something or somebody—as if he possessed, or at least represented, a power, which it quietly amused him to see that the others but half realised.

Nothing could be better than the way in which matters began. Lord Aiden shook hands with him humanely, as if he were some zoological curiosity ; Mr. Stanley did so with a keener and far friendlier interest ; and Miss Consuelo Burton fixed her eyes on him, as if he were a sphinx who, with regard to the social riddle, not only asked, but was perhaps able to answer, it. Mrs. Harley was anxious about no one except Lady Chislehurst ; and Lady Chislehurst in a moment sent all such anxiety to the winds. Graciousness hardly describes her manner as she approached Foreman. It seemed as if a flock of blessings flew out of her mouth when she spoke to him, and settled all over him, even upon the back of his chair : nor had many sentences passed

between them before she was attacking him with the magic name of the Cardinal.

‘Yes,’ he answered, smiling, ‘the Cardinal means well, but——’

He looked at Lady Chislehurst ; and to all but Lady Chislehurst herself the pause expressed a reserved contempt for Cardinals, far too complete to have any tincture of hostility. It was plain, however, that he had every wish to be civil ; and, clearing his throat, he added a moment afterwards : ‘In one point at least we Socialists agree with you. The first great wrong ever done to the English people was, in our estimation, the theft of the monastic properties.’

He spoke calmly and pleasantly ; but Carew could not help observing that his hands for a second clenched themselves, as if in unconscious anger.

Lady Chislehurst was charmed with what she had heard. ‘Yes, of course,’ she said. ‘The Church was always the best friend of the poor. Mr. Foreman, let me give you another cup of tea ; and come, I must get rid of that nasty slop in your saucer for you.’

‘Mr. Foreman,’ interposed Mrs. Harley, ‘please let me remind you that you are under a solemn compact with us not to say anything till to-morrow—Lady Mangotsfield goes to-morrow, doesn’t she, Mr. Carew?—not to say anything till then about such dangerous matters as “we Socialists.” And yet—George, we must ask him this before we go up to dress for dinner—tell us, Mr. Foreman, about your socialistic candidates. He,’ she added, explaining her question to the others, ‘has twenty Socialist friends, who are standing at this election.’

‘Yes, Foreman,’ said Harley, ‘tell us about your candidates. You surely don’t expect to get all of them in—or indeed any of them?’

Mrs. Harley looked at her husband with some anxiety. ‘Do let him take care,’ she murmured to herself, ‘or we shall be having a scene in no time !’

Foreman meanwhile had sat straight up in his chair ;

and though his expression had not ceased to be friendly, a flush of excitement had mounted into his cheek, and there was a momentary glance in his eyes like a flash of faint sheet-lightning. 'No,' he said, 'I am expecting to get in nobody: for revolutions are things that are never made by an individual—any more than they are ever stopped by one. But you are right as to twenty successes. Those I do not expect: but in the next Parliament, as sure as I sit here, the Social Revolution will have at least fifteen representatives.'

'My dear Foreman,' said Harley, 'you are a master of statistical prophecy.'

'Does any one remember,' said Lord Aiden, 'what was the number of the Beast? Because I have sometimes fancied it might be the number of the existing House of Commons.'

This pleasantry seemed hugely to tickle Foreman; and he startled the company by bursting into vociferous laughter. 'Capital!' he gasped, as by degrees he recovered himself. 'A middle-class House of Commons, a parliament of Japhet Snappers! I doubt if any prophet ever foresaw such a Beast as that. Allow me, however, with regard to my own Apocalypse, to say that my statistics have not been revealed to me in an ecstasy. They are based on the books of the League of Social Democrats, which allow us to test the rate at which our opinions spread.'

'Suppose,' said Mrs. Harley, who saw here an opportunity for interrupting him—'suppose you tell us about all that to-morrow; and at dinner, if you would wish to make somebody really happy, tell Lady Mangotsfield what you think of the House of Commons. By the way,' she hurried on, determined to change the conversation, which she saw had already begun to alarm Lady Chislehurst, 'talking of books, Mr. Foreman, is this book yours? I found you reading it, and I have only just seen what it was.'

'What is it?' cried several voices.

'What!' said Mrs. Harley, holding it up. 'It is one of

Thackeray's novels. I'm surprised that Mr. Foreman, who wants to reform away everything, should condescend to be amused at such a trifling writer as Thackeray, whose whole view of life was confined to polite society.'

'Oh,' exclaimed Foreman, rubbing his hands, and raising his eyes to the ceiling with a thoughtful leer of appreciation, 'Thackeray to me is delicious—absolutely and altogether delicious. He's the greatest political novelist of this or of any country. Of no party movement has there been ever so exquisite an analysis as that which forms the substance of all Thackeray's novels. It's worth all the histories of modern Radicalism put together.'

Lord Aiden eyed Foreman with a stare of tolerant curiosity; and then turning to Harley, who stood next him, 'I don't know,' he said, 'about Thackeray's politics; but of all great novelists he is to my mind by far the most vulgar.'

'Vulgar!' replied Foreman, who caught the word. 'Of course he is vulgar—gloriously vulgar!' and here he began laughing; but his laugh was abruptly drowned by the overpowering clang of the dressing-bell.

'Mr. Foreman,' said Mrs. Harley, as they were all preparing to separate, 'you have been talking riddles to us. At dinner we shall call on you to explain yourself. I think,' she added to Lady Chislehurst, as they were leaving the room together, 'Thackeray's novels and Mr. Snapper's iniquities ought to see us safely through the evening—at least till Lady Mangotsfield has retired.'

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PROPHET RESTRAINS HIMSELF.

MRS. HARLEY proved eventually to have been not far wrong in her anticipations; though there was one dreadful moment which made her fear she had been so. This was the moment of Foreman's introduction to Lady Mangotsfield. The great lady, as soon as he was brought up to her, raised

her wrinkled eyelids with a mild benignity, and was inclining her head very slightly but encouragingly, in recognition of Lord B——'s political foundling, when the foundling, to her astonishment, had actually the presumption to say that 'he was very much pleased to meet her and make her acquaintance.' He said it, too, in a voice that had actually the presumption to be genial; and he filled up the measure of his audacity by unhesitatingly holding out his hand to her.

Lady Mangotsfield gave as good a start as she had done on the previous evening at the mention of Mr. Snapper; and raising her eyeglass as her greeting died on her lips, she scrutinised Foreman from head to foot, wondering, so it seemed, if he could really be the person she had heard about. At last she said, very much in the same tone she she might have used when engaging a servant bringing a doubtful character: 'You used, I think, to know Lord B——, didn't you?'

'Oh yes,' said Foreman, perfectly unabashed. 'I used at one time to have many conversations with him.'

'And is it true,' she went on, 'that he wanted to put you into Parliament?'

It was now Foreman's turn to start, and Mrs. Harley, who was watching him, said afterwards that at this question his very beard was beginning to bristle. Luckily, however, before he had time to answer, dinner was announced, and his arm was claimed by Mrs. Harley, Lady Mangotsfield being carried off by Carew.

At dinner things were on a securer footing. Foreman was placed in very excellent custody. Mr. Stanley was on one side of him, and Mrs. Harley on the other; whilst Carew divided Mrs. Harley from Lady Mangotsfield. Foreman in this position was almost powerless for mischief, and his conversation became little more than a tap which those near him could turn on and off as they chose. Mrs. Harley felt now quite in her element, and everything went exactly as she designed it. 'I forget, Lady Mangotsfield,' she began, 'if you are an admirer of Thackeray? We were

talking of him just before dinner, and we were having a grand dispute about him.'

'There's nobody like him now, my dear,' said Lady Mangotsfield; 'not so clever, I mean. When his books came out I read them—so we all of us did. But I didn't like them. There was always a vulgar tone in them. What does Lord Aiden say?'

'I,' Lord Aiden replied, 'say exactly the same thing; except that I think I should put it in stronger language. You, Mr. Foreman, hold also the same opinion?'

Lady Mangotsfield again put up her eyeglass and looked at Foreman, as if in bewilderment as to what a man like that should know about such a subject. Mrs. Harley meanwhile was joining issue with all of them.

'I confess,' she was saying, 'I can't see what you mean. You call Thackeray vulgar. Why, he was always lashing vulgarity.'

'If he was,' exclaimed Foreman, breaking out into a chuckling laugh—'if he was, he was like Job, scraping his own sores.'

Lady Mangotsfield dropped her eyeglass. She looked more surprised than ever; but the surprise changed its character. Her withered lips worked themselves into a smile, and leaning a little forwards, with a voice of tremulous approbation, 'That's very coarse, Mr. Foreman,' she said, 'but it's very true—very true indeed.'

'Mr. Foreman, however,' said Lord Aiden, 'thinks one thing which I confess I don't understand. He thinks that Thackeray was our chief political novelist.'

'Oh no,' said Lady Mangotsfield, shaking her head as if that answered the question—'oh no; poor dear Lord B—— was that. No political novels were ever written like his.'

'Excuse me,' said Foreman, 'but Thackeray exhibited what Lord B—— hardly tried to describe, and that is the origin of the modern Radical party—the party which calls itself the party of the working-men and of the people.'

‘In Thackeray’s days,’ said Lady Mangotsfield, ‘there was no such a party existing. We were all very good to the poor, but nobody cared anything about the people. Politicians in those days were gentlemen.’

‘Do you think the Radical party,’ said Foreman, ‘cares anything about the people now—or about the poor either? Not they. I’ve watched them for twenty years, and the one idea in their minds——’ He paused and looked round the table to see if he was being listened to. He was. There was silence, and then he resumed his sentence. ‘The one idea in their minds is precisely the same idea that occupies Thackeray’s mind through every one of his novels.’

‘And pray,’ said Lady Chislehurst, ‘what idea is that?’

‘The uneasy and envious inferiority of a *bourgeoisie* in contact with an aristocracy,’ said Foreman, in a voice so emphatic that it seemed to defy dissent. ‘Every virtue and every vice is measured in his mind by its relation to that : and this essentially limited and middle-class source of temptation is for him the supreme evil that man has to struggle with.’

‘Perfectly true,’ said Lord Aiden. ‘No criticism could be truer.’

‘I,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘can’t admit that for a moment. Of Thackeray’s own character we are of course none of us talking : we are talking of the class which Mr. Foreman says is analysed by him, and I quite deny that either in Thackeray’s books or in reality their lives as a rule are filled by this one idea he speaks of. I have known—I know—any number of the unmistakable middle-class myself——’

‘My dear,’ interposed Lady Mangotsfield, ‘I’m sure you know a number of shocking people.’

‘And I can only say,’ Mrs. Harley continued, ‘that simpler people, people more unworldly, and less pushing I never met with in my life.’

‘You misunderstand me,’ said Foreman. ‘Two thirds of the middle-class are Conservative. You may take their content. I willingly make you a present of it. I am talking

only of the one third, which is Radical, and that one third represents human nature for Thackeray. According to Thackeray man has only two temptations—to fawn on his superiors, or else to spit in their faces. Had he not shown us with all the force of his genius that there are men of whom this is really true, it would for many of us be very difficult to believe it. But there are such men—there is a whole class of them ; and the Radicalism of to-day is the expression of their corporate character. In Thackeray's days, Lady Mangotsfield, they had not learnt how to express it. Will you allow me to tell you out of my own humble life a little anecdote which will help to explain my meaning? In the country town where I used to live when a boy, the great lady was the doctor's wife, Mrs. Hopkins, and Dr. Hopkins had no more admiring patient than Mrs. Skinner, the wife of the wealthiest draper. Well, one Christmas Mrs. Hopkins gave two memorable parties : the first for her best friends, the second for her second best. Mrs. Skinner—I remember the event now—poor soul, she was asked to the second ; and she met the wife of the butcher, and was given a stale mince-pie. From that day forth the doctor, once so infallible, became, according to her, an ignorant brazen quack, and she threatened to go to law with him for having sent her the wrong prescription. Now, in place of the Hopkinses put the gentlemen of the country. Take the condition of good Mrs. Skinner's mind, give it political instead of private libel to work with, and there you have a complete and accurate image of our Radical leaders when they pretend to a popular policy. Snapper, for instance, after a public meeting—a public meeting at which he has been denouncing the landlords, were there only some talisman that could force his real thoughts from him, no fun since the world began could equal it ! Bless my soul, with him and with all his followers, the real grievance is that they cannot dine with dukes, not that millions of wage-slaves can get no dinners at all.'

'Perfectly true,' said Lady Mangotsfield to Carew. 'I

never heard anything truer ; if only the dear man would make a little less noise about it.'

'Mr. Foreman,' said Mrs. Harley, 'since when have you become so exclusive?'

Foreman stared at her. 'I can't imagine what you mean,' he said.

'I am thinking,' said Mrs. Harley, 'of the magnificent way in which you contrast Mr. Snapper with the *gentlemen* of the country, who seem according to you to be synonymous with the country gentleman.'

'They are so,' said Foreman, squaring his elbows and leaning on them, 'the country gentlemen and their families. I am quite aware that to many this use of the word is offensive, for to many people there is nothing so offensive as truth. But a gentleman is a man who is born in a certain way ; he is the same thing as a *gentilhomme*, and any other definition, as Dr. Johnson says, is fantastic. I am myself not a gentleman any more than I am a negro. By birth I belong to the middle classes, and, thanks to my opinions, I belong to no class at all.'

'Really, Mr. Foreman,' began Lady Chislehurst, 'a man of your intellect and education——' But Foreman politely interrupted her.

'Excuse me,' he said, 'I know what you would tell me exactly. You would tell me that I was a gentleman because I was a man of education, and in one sense you would speak sincerely. But would you say the same, I should like to know, if I wished to marry your daughter?'

Had such a question been asked with any trace of personal feeling, it would naturally have produced the most awkward situation imaginable. But Foreman smiled as he spoke with the most perfect and most phlegmatic apathy, and though Lady Chislehurst coloured at the first moment, a glance at his face at once made her calm again. As for Lady Mangotsfield, she needed no calming whatever.

'A nice unassuming person, this friend of yours,' she said to Carew, and then turning her glasses on Foreman

with a twinkle of condescending encouragement, 'If every one else,' she said, 'were like you, Mr. Foreman, England would not long be in the state it is at present.'

'By God!' roared Foreman, 'you are perfectly right there.'

Lady Mangotsfield's last sentence had been too much for him. Everybody stared at him thunderstruck—everybody but Lady Mangotsfield herself. As for her, she merely turned to Carew, and wrinkling her forehead, as if the sound had pained her, 'It's a pity,' she said, 'that in his manners he's not a little more what one could wish him. But on the whole I like him. He speaks the truth, and he don't pretend to be a gentleman.'

'Yes,' said Lord Aiden to Foreman, as they were strolling into the drawing-room, laying his hand as he spoke on the other's shoulder, 'I always thought myself this social envy of the landlords was really at the bottom of the popular philanthropy of the Radicals.'

'Well,' said Foreman, with a grim though good-natured smile, 'we Socialists shall cure them of that at least, for we shall by-and-by leave the landlords very little to envy.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE PROPHET'S FIRST THUNDERS.

IF Lady Mangotsfield liked Foreman during dinner, her liking did not prove to be a very durable feeling, though, to do her justice, it only departed gradually. They had hardly been in the drawing-room five minutes before he had returned of his own accord to the subject which the others, for his sake, would have studiously avoided.

'We were talking at dinner, Lady Chislehurst,' he began, 'about gentlemen and not gentlemen. I am told that the other night you had *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* acted here. Do you remember what Cléonte says to Monsieur Jourdain : *Je vous dirai franchement que je ne suis point gentilhomme ?*

If only our *bourgeoisie* had the same common sense in England! As for me, my own parentage was this: my father was a small grocer, my mother was the daughter of a parson. She married against the will of her family; in your class you would say she made a *mésalliance*. The parson's father was an auctioneer, and from him, at his son's death, there descended to my mother some fifteen thousand pounds—enough to maintain, and it did maintain, a family in that swinish comfort which the middle classes adore, and which tends to foster a viler type of life than anything does, except the lowest stage of privation.'

'Well,' said Lady Mangotsfield to Lord Aiden, as if making the best of things, 'he's quite right not to be ashamed of his parents, though he needn't think we're so anxious to hear all about his private affairs.'

'I don't want,' Foreman was meanwhile proceeding, unconsciously anticipating this criticism—'I don't want to trouble you with my own biography; I only want to show you this—from what position I look out upon the world, and how perfectly free I am from aristocratic bias when I criticise, as I have done, the middle-class Radical party. I have left my own class, but I have not tried to enter yours, except as a curious observer. That I have done, and in so impartial a spirit that I could, if I liked, give my own impressions of you with as little prejudice as if you were South Sea Islanders.'

A slight cloud was gathering on Lady Mangotsfield's face. Lady Chislehurst's, on the contrary, was brightening with the sunlight of inquiry. 'Well,' she said, 'give us some of your impressions do! We are all listening. Nothing could interest us more. I feel,' she added, as she smoothed down her rustling silk, 'just as if one was going to hear one's character told from one's hand.'

'You want to know,' said Foreman, looking round him, 'what I, an outsider, think of you. I'm very blunt; I go to the point at once. I think, then, that you, the ladies and the gentlemen of England, are the only people who

behave like ladies and gentlemen; for all such behaviour is based upon one thing—a sense of inherited and unworked-for superiority. Other classes, no doubt, may try to copy it, but they have not the sense I speak of, so the copy is merely a sham. It is as meaningless as a portcullis would be at the gate of a Clapham villa.'

'Come,' interposed Mrs. Harley, 'I shall make a stand now in earnest. If you are going to talk again about what classes are vulgar and not vulgar, I must at any rate tell you this. I've met with more vulgarity and more snob-bishness in the very highest sections of society than I ever have done in any other. And as for refinement, cultivation, and real consideration for others, I could show you these in every grade of the middle classes—yes, and amongst the workmen too.'

'My dear Mrs Harley,' said Lord Aiden, 'that I can well believe. A snob is simply a person, no matter what his station, who judges aristocratic society by the standards and with the feelings of the middle class: and many fine people, now classes are so jostled together, have learnt to do this, as we all of us here must know.'

'There's more truth,' exclaimed Foreman, 'in what you have just said than perhaps your Lordship appreciates. Those qualities, Mrs. Harley, which you just now named to us—they make a man better than a gentleman, but they don't make him a gentleman, and I can't think why you should try to prove they do.'

'Dear Lady Mangotsfield,' said Lady Chislehurst, 'and what is your view of the matter?'

'What, my dear? What?' said Lady Mangotsfield sharply. 'I've not been listening to what has been said lately. I don't at all understand what it all is you have been talking about.' This reply was accompanied by a slight rustling sound; and the party then perceived that Lady Mangotsfield had a newspaper in front of her, and either was, or was at least pretending to be, quite unconscious of the conversation. It was all very well, she

thought, that Foreman should admit he was not a gentleman, and should expose the malcontents of his own rank in life with the authority that comes of near acquaintanceship. It might even be borne—though this was perhaps a liberty—that he should compliment gentlemen on the superiority of their breeding. But that he should presume to go into such niceties as what good breeding was, and that her friends should be discussing with him—the son of a small grocer—the most delicate social problems that occupy high society—this was more than Lady Mangotsfield could endure. A copy of the ‘Figaro’ had happened to be beside her, which afforded her the means of making a silent protest; and though it is true she was holding it upside down, she managed to fix her eyes on it with an air of severe abstraction.

‘We’ve been talking,’ said Lady Chislehurst, ‘about the difference between snobs and gentlemen. We thought it was a subject in which you took a good deal of interest.’

‘Not I, my dear,’ said Lady Mangotsfield. ‘I don’t know anything about snobs. In my day we used to have nothing to do with them. Mr. Carew, may I ask you to light me a candle and ring for my servant. I think I will go upstairs now. I shall have a great deal,’ she added as she was going out of the door—‘I shall have a great deal to tell that fine gentleman, Mr. Inigo, if I see him. He, I’ve no doubt, will be charmed to hear all about it.’

It was well for Lady Mangotsfield’s feelings that she left the scene when she did, for Foreman, despite her inattention, was fast warming with his subject, and all the others were anxious to keep him going. Hardly had Lady Mangotsfield had the door closed upon her, when he had again fastened on Mrs. Harley and caught up the thread of his argument.

‘Why, Mrs. Harley,’ he said, ‘should you be so anxious to prove all your virtuous friends gentlemen? And why, Lady Chislehurst, should you be shy of denying the title to me? The distinction really is hardly worth fighting for. You and your friends will possess it a little longer, but nobody will possess it for long. When it goes it will be a pretty thing

lost ; but it is merely a pretty thing now, though once it was much more.'

'And why,' said Lady Chislehurst, 'do you think it need go at all?'

'And why, pray,' said Mrs. Harley, 'should it not be shared by everybody?'

'Why?' echoed Foreman. 'For a precious simple reason. Because you can never turn everybody into a small and exceptional class. That is why you can't confer it on others. Before very long you will have ceased to be exceptional ; and this is why you will soon lose it yourselves. How do you differ from the wealthy middle classes? In this—that along with your wealth you have traditions of hereditary power and usefulness. Well, your part is played ; you are useful and powerful no longer. Don't think I speak from any ill feeling against an aristocracy as such. As a Socialist—I suppose, Mrs. Harley, I may use that terrible word now—as a Socialist, I regard you as the survival of a class that was once both noble and necessary : whereas the modern middle class, the slave-driving *bourgeoisie*, has been bad from the very beginning, and every day it is growing worse.'

'Do you think,' said Carew, 'that, supposing we made an effort, there would be a chance for us still of retrieving a lost position?'

'No,' said Foreman bluffly, 'I don't think, Mr. Carew, that there would ; and if you like it, I'll tell you why, though Lord Aiden— he may not know it—has really told you already. You, the gentlemen of the country, the old landed families—I include, too, the newer ones which have acquired the good-will of their predecessors—you no longer stand on your own proper foundations. You are reduced financially to mere hangers-on of the *bourgeoisie*. Your material splendour, which once had a real meaning, is still, no doubt, maintained. But how? Here is an instance. Some while since I went from curiosity to see the castle of a certain duke. During the last ten years it has been what he calls restored. The yellow stucco of ninety years ago has given place to the

towers of a Gothic castle. Well, what does this imposing transformation mean? That his Grace has become more powerful as a territorial noble? Not a bit of it. What it means is this: that he has five million dollars' worth of railway stock in America. Such is the case with the whole body of the aristocracy.'

'I wish,' murmured Lord Aiden to Carew, 'I could say it was the case with me.'

'It is a type,' went on Foreman, 'of the present position of you all. You could no longer live like seigneurs if you were not half tradesmen.'

'But surely,' said Mrs. Harley, 'these are the very people—these rich landlords with capital to fall back upon—who as landlords can be most generous to their tenantry.'

'Yes,' said Foreman, 'and some of them are generous. Some of them have returned 50 per cent. of their rents, where 10 per cent. would have been more than ample. Such generosity does more harm than good; and, apart from that, you seem quite to forget the operatives—the hands, as you call them, the poor jaded underfed wage-slaves, drudging somewhere in the foul air of some factory, who really supply the cost of it. You quite forget, or you else have not yet learnt, the one grand truth that we Socialists mean to teach you. The profits of capital are the spoliation of labour; and it is as impossible for a capitalist to be a real friend of the people as for the owner of a gin-palace to be a real apostle of temperance.'

Foreman's savage accent was in this last utterance; and Mrs. Harley, who knew it well, detected its presence not without anxiety. Mr. Stanley, however, seemed perfectly unruffled; and with an air of authority which seemed to surprise Foreman said, 'There you raise two quite distinct points. Allow me for the present to put the last one aside—the illegitimacy of the profits derived from capital; and accepting these profits as a fact, I will put one question to you. You admit that our aristocracy still has a tradition of leadership. Don't you think that an aristocrat who receives

the profits of capital may possibly administer them in the old aristocratic spirit? For, after all, what are they? Merely a new form of power.'

'Ah,' said Foreman, with a slightly malicious laugh, 'I am coming to that now. For the moment, if you like, I will grant that your profits are right enough. I will keep that crow to pick with you by-and-by: and since you wish it, I will answer you this first. Only, I tell you again, Lord Aiden has anticipated me in what just now he said about snobs and snobbishness.'

'What did I say? I forget,' murmured Lord Aiden languidly.

'You said, my lord,' said Foreman, 'that a number of fine people had learnt to judge of one another by the standards of the class below them. And that is what I have to say in answer to Mr. Stanley. Not only has our aristocracy cast in its lot with the *bourgeoisie* financially, but it has become corrupted by the ideas of the *bourgeoisie* socially. You have often told me, Mrs. Harley, and I have gathered it myself from the papers, that if some Manchester slave-driver wants to succeed in London, thousands of pounds are spent on a single ball, and to this, with the aid of some fashionable lady as an accomplice, the fashionable world comes flocking like so many moths about a candle.'

'Yes,' said Harley, 'that is perfectly true; and next week they will have forgotten the host and hostess.'

'I think, dear,' said his wife, 'that you are wrong there. They will be quite civil to them; and will ask them, in return, to their own balls. But the civility will be so distant that virtually it amounts to an insult; and my only wonder is that these people will stand it.'

'Oh!' said Foreman, gruffly; 'they know it won't last for long. The people who are rude to them this year, five years hence will be courting them.'

'You are quite right,' said Lord Aiden in a melancholy murmur. 'This rudeness is only the sacrifice which our

fine people offer to their own self-respect. Think of the self-respect which such a sacrifice can propitiate !'

'At any rate,' said Carew, with a slight cynical laugh, 'they won't let their territory be invaded without a struggle.'

'The territory,' said Foreman, 'is only sticking out for the highest price it can get. But this,' he went on, 'is merely a side matter. The point is not that you truckle to their wealth—not even that you share it. The point is that you adopt their standards, which are the very inverse of your own, and that you are fast coming to measure all life by them. A man once had a stately dinner because he was a great man. Now he is a great man because he has a stately dinner. That is the principle on which you countenance them ; and, having once accepted it, you have to apply it to yourselves. Here you have the reason why half the land of England is mortgaged. Think of this *bourgeoisie* which was once fawning at your feet ; and now you are ruining yourselves in order to feed it with truffles, or to avoid the shame of not eating so many truffles as it does.'

'Come,' said Mrs. Harley, 'I want you to tell me this. How does a man who draws an income, say, from a brewery differ from a man who has had just the same education, but happens to draw his income from an old landed property? Would you really wish that from a mere sense of pride the one should refuse to associate on equal terms with the other?'

'They don't differ,' said Foreman, 'except superficially. That is the very point I am arguing.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Harley, 'and how should they, or could they?'

'They can't,' said Foreman. 'That is, again, my point. Revolutions, as I told you, are not made by individuals ; and the social change which we are now speaking of is only a fragment of a change that is far wider. No ; our aristocracy and our *bourgeoisie* don't differ, except superficially ; and it is absurd for the one to affect to despise the other, because it

is absurd to believe that an aristocracy any longer really exists. There are but two classes in the world—labourers, and those who traffic in labour.’

‘What, then, Mr. Foreman,’ said Lady Chislehurst, a little severely, ‘can you possibly mean by what you just now told us about Radicalism? You told us that the motive of the rich Radical classes was nothing but envy of this same non-existent aristocracy.’

‘When I spoke,’ replied Foreman, ‘of our aristocracy as having ceased to exist, remember, please, that I added this saving clause. I said—I even urged—that it still retained its appearance, which, though not a sham, and when gone quite irreplaceable, is all the same a mere dying survival. Still, it is this—this shadow, this phantom—which our rich *bourgeoisie* envy; but envy is a passion which shows itself in two opposite ways. The retired huckster who spends five thousand pounds on hanging a ball-room with roses, in the hope that countesses will dance in it—his is an ambition which is petty and ignoble enough. But make his ambition still more intense and sensitive, make it ten times more abject, ten times more grovelling, and then it inverts itself, and turns into rancorous hatred. The orators who are so anxious to rob the lords of their coronets are the very men who, had the opportunity only come to them, would have given their eyes to boast about “My intimate friend Lord So-and-so.”’

‘That,’ said Lord Aiden, ‘I am sure, is perfectly true.’

‘And I can give you, my lord,’ said Foreman, ‘one piece of comfort at least. Before Mr. Snapper relieves you of your lordship’s coronet, we shall have relieved Mr. Snapper of many things far more substantial.’

‘Now, Mr. Foreman,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘although you are a Revolutionist, you must not forget you are an invalid; and society itself, though it is only as old as civilisation, is hardly more easy to upset than your health at the present moment. So you must let me remind you that it is already past your bedtime.’

‘You’re very kind to me,’ said Foreman, with real gratitude in his voice.

‘I’ll tell you what I am,’ said Mrs. Harley. ‘I’m very much provoked at you. It’s all very fine to denounce the *bourgeoisie*, as you call them. But why should not Mr. Snapper, if he uses his wealth well, be as useful to England under Queen Victoria as ever was any baron before the Wars of the Roses? Mr. Stanley asked you that very question just now——’

‘Yes,’ said Foreman, looking about him eagerly, ‘and would you really listen to me if I gave you the full answer? If so, you shall hear a few more truths to-morrow.’

‘Do you know,’ said Harley, as soon as Foreman was out of the room, ‘there’s a good bit of shrewdness in some of the things he says.’

‘You mean,’ said Lord Aiden, ‘about Radicalism, and fine ladies, and ball-rooms?’

‘All that,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘about ball-rooms hung with roses—poor Foreman, I don’t suppose he was ever in a ball-room in his life—it’s all true in a way, but of course it’s out of proportion.’

‘The simple fact of the matter,’ said Lord Aiden, ‘is this. He makes the mistake of every theorist who approaches a life with which he is not familiar, and thinks he can understand it by the aid of his general principles. One can do that with no high society—least of all with English. The relation that prevails, and indeed has always prevailed in England, between birth and riches, between rank, power, and talent, may not, perhaps, be the most important problem in the world; but, excepting Chinese grammar, I doubt if anything is more complicated; and a judgment on it that even approaches truth is as nice a thing as the most delicate chemical compound. It is a mental secretion rather than a mental achievement. It is easy to learn principles; the problem is how to apply them. They themselves may possibly never change; but the circumstances they apply to are rarely in two cases the same; and

our social judgments, and much of what we mean by good-breeding, are a constant process of instinctive casuistry.'

'Precisely,' said Mr. Stanley. 'A man is no nearer being well-bred from having learnt the rules of an etiquette book, than he is nearer being a saint from knowing the ten commandments. And,' he added, smiling, 'as for our friend Mr. Foreman, what he says may be shrewd enough here and there; but taking as a whole his views of the wealthier classes, his own manners, I expect, are more like those of a dandy than his judgment of the dandy's position would be like the actual truth.'

'Well,' said Carew, 'we shall see what he will tell us to-morrow.'

'And you too, Mr. Carew,' exclaimed Lady Chislehurst, 'you mustn't forget that you still owe us a debt. Do you remember your promise to tell us something about yourself, and some little mystery that employs you here at the château? My dear,' she whispered to Miss Consuelo Burton, 'my own belief is, he's preparing himself for becoming a Catholic.'

'Foreman,' said Carew, 'leaves us to-morrow afternoon. When he is gone I shall be pleased to show you my mystery.'

CHAPTER X.

THE GOSPEL OF REVOLUTION.

NEITHER Foreman nor Lady Mangotsfield had so absorbed the attention of everybody as to prevent the arrangements being made that came so near Lady Chislehurst's heart for the celebration next morning of early Mass in the chapel; and the servants for the occasion deserting the village church, there was present a very respectable congregation. To Lady Chislehurst's extreme delight, Carew was amongst the number; though could she have read the inner thoughts of his heart, she would have seen in what brought him there some cause for disappointment. He came less in the

hopes of being touched by the sacred rite himself, than for the sake of observing the demeanour of Miss Consuelo Burton.

On a similar occasion, unknown to her, he had once before watched her at the Brompton Oratory ; and the sight of her there had left behind it an image which, whenever he thought of it, gave a secret elevation to his life. And could it be, he had now lately asked himself—could it be that this vision, this faith was leaving her, which had once almost awed him, as though it made her a superior being, and yet, at the same time, had somehow suggested help to him? Much of what she had said during the last few days seemed to hint this ; and as, from a shadowy corner, he now fixed his eyes on her, he watched with a feeling of apprehensive sadness to detect some signs in her of a difference from her former self. And such signs, without doubt, he did detect ; but they were not of the kind he had anticipated. What was his surprise when, instead of seeing, as he was prepared to see, that the devotion once so fervent had become lukewarm and perfunctory, he grew gradually to realise more and more that, if signs meant anything, it had grown and not lost in intensity ! This was the girl who, only the day before, had seemed to be complaining that the chief of her Church's sacraments had ceased for her to have any saving virtue. Carew, as he watched her, felt more strongly than ever as if, through her, he were somehow placed in the presence of a power, a life, and a help which, to his own eye, was hidden ; and when she rose finally, and was about to leave the chapel, her dark eyes, as she raised them towards the dingy window, seemed to have another light in them beyond what came through the cobwebs, and there was a glimmer in them as of tears that had just been shed secretly.

'Well,' said Lady Chislehurst as she met him in the passage afterwards, 'I am glad, Mr. Carew, to have seen you here this morning.'

'Next,' said Carew, 'to saying a prayer oneself, the best thing is to watch a good Catholic praying.'

Lady Chislehurst answered this with a glance of benediction and encouragement ; and then for an instant laying her hand on his arm, 'Did you see,' she said, 'some one else, who was present in the gallery? I could hardly believe my eyes : it was actually Mr. Foreman.'

At this very moment Foreman himself appeared, having emerged from a narrow staircase.

'Mr. Foreman !' exclaimed Lady Chislehurst, 'allow me to congratulate you on the way in which you have begun your Sunday.'

'Oh,' said Foreman, with a bland and careless laugh, 'I watch beliefs just as I watch classes. Besides, to-day I was doing what is merely an act of justice. I have been listening to you because you have promised to listen to me.'

At breakfast, Lady Mangotsfield being safe with an egg in bed, Mr. Stanley recurred to this same subject. 'Mr. Foreman,' he said, 'must remember what lies before him. He promised to tell us why what he calls the *bourgeoisie* can never succeed to the part that was once played by the aristocracy. I have a special curiosity to hear what he says on this point ; so I, for one, shall be no party to excusing him.'

Foreman was flattered to find he had roused such interest ; but he experienced a sensation of somewhat uneasy surprise at the critical tone which his ear seemed to catch in Mr. Stanley's manner of speaking about his 'special curiosity.' 'What,' thought Foreman, 'can this man, who only an hour ago was muttering hocus pocus, in the dress of a mediæval conjurer—what can he know of the rights and the claims of Labour? What can he know of that coming social earthquake which will send his churches toppling like a house of cards?'

'I trust,' he said civilly, but with a slight accent of sarcasm, 'that you will not think, if I really try to explain myself, that I am engaging you on subjects not befitting the day.'

'On the contrary,' said Mr. Stanley, with the same note in his voice, which seemed to indicate that he was treading

on familiar ground, 'if your theory, or if your religion—I suppose, Mr. Foreman, I may venture to call it a religion——'

'Certainly,' said Foreman ; 'and of a kind that will make martyrs.'

'Well,' said Mr. Stanley, 'if your religion were true, I should regard it at once as an integral part of mine.'

'Do you think, sir,' said Foreman, 'that the two would agree together?'

'They would,' said Mr. Stanley, 'if the world were perfect ; and when the world is perfect they will.'

'Perhaps,' returned Foreman, 'you are hardly quite aware of what the principles of us Socialists are.'

'And for that reason,' said Mr. Stanley, 'we are so anxious that you should tell us.'

After breakfast Foreman's first proceeding was to beg Mrs. Harley to have a word in private with him.

'I have with me,' he said in a low confidential tone, 'a copy of the new Address which the League is printing by thousands, and distributing in all the poorer quarters in London. It has also been translated into French, and our executive committee has sent two thousand copies to Decazeville, and ten thousand to the men on strike in Belgium. It goes straight, and without any humbug, to the bottom of the matter ; and as these people seem anxious to hear something more from me, I could give them a glimpse of the ground they are really standing on. Do you think they would listen to me? I don't want to convert them ; it's of no possible moment whether they are converted or not, and I should be sorry to bore them when no good could come of it.'

'No, no,' said Mrs. Harley ; 'let us have your address by all means. I will put it to them now, and I'm sure they will say the same. Mr. Carew, Lady Chislehurst, everybody : Mr. Foreman says, if you wish to hear more about Socialism he will read you a paper he has just written himself, and which will tell us all just what we want to hear from him.'

Every one assented to this proposal with pleasure, and a servant was sent to Foreman's bedroom for a bag, which seemed when it appeared to be bulging with revolutionary literature.

'Holloa !' exclaimed Harley, 'hooray for the dynamite ! Evelyn, why in the world have I been given this red pocket-handkerchief? I'll give it to Foreman, and he shall use it as a flag.'

'Ah,' said Foreman with a grunt, 'you may laugh if you like now. But even now you'd perhaps not laugh so much could you only see a letter which I got this morning from Chicago.' And he pulled out and tapped an exceedingly dirty-looking envelope.

Meanwhile, however, he had been grubbing about in his bag, and at last he extracted from it, with a quiet triumphant smile, a limp printed document like an electioneering leaflet. By this time his congregation had gathered round him, the members varying in the depth and quality of their interest, but all possessed with the not unpleasant feeling that they were going to be given a peep into the mind of a real conspirator.

'What I am going to read,' began Foreman, 'as I have just told Mrs. Harley, is designed for the poorest workmen.' But here he stopped ; his eyes seemed to be straying from the paper he was reading to another that was lying upon his knee. 'Perhaps,' he said, as he took up this latter, 'you will let me first add a word or two to something I said last night.'

All his audience looked at him, and they were surprised both in his voice and his expression to detect a softness that had hitherto been present in neither. 'We were talking,' he went on, 'about Thackeray, and the social facts which he represented. I have here an extract from the best of his books, though the least instructive—"Esmond" ; and just as in most places he exhibits the meanest of all social emotions, so here he spreads out for us, as a soft bed to repose upon, the falsest and yet the most plausible of all the

moral emotions. "Love," he writes—and the writing is pretty enough—"Love, *omnia vincit*, is immeasurably above all ambitions, more precious than wealth, more noble than name. He knows not life who knows not that ; he hath not felt the highest faculty of the soul who hath not enjoyed it. In the name of my wife I write the completion of hope and the summit of happiness. To have such love is the one blessing in comparison of which all earthly joy is of no value ; and to think of her is to praise God ! ”

‘ Beautiful ! ’ said Lady Chislehurst.

‘ Why, that, ’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘ is my favourite bit in Thackeray. What have you to say against that ? ’

‘ Pooh ! ’ said Foreman. ‘ There is the fault of all religions. They keep you fiddling away with your own private emotions, dusting your own souls as if they were women’s boudoirs, and filling yourselves with ecstasy if none of the little Dresden-china virtues in them are broken. What right have you to think *that* the summit of happiness, when your neighbours are turned into brutes by despair or hunger next door to you ? Give me the man whose only notion of love is derived from a sixpenny kiss and a pair of painted cheeks ; and if such a man remembers the crying misery of the poor, he’s a better man, I say, than any others who forget it, even if they forget it in praising God for their wives.’

Lady Chislehurst’s face became frigid with disapproval, and she cast an anxious glance towards Miss Consuelo Burton. Mr. Stanley, who was sitting near Foreman, said something in a low tone to him, in which Miss Consuelo’s name occurred ; but it was evident that then he must have added something conciliating, for Foreman, dropping the paper he had just been glancing at, again took up the original one, and proposed to resume his reading. As for Miss Consuelo herself, Carew looked at her, and her eyes were fixed on Foreman, as if her very soul were in the words he had just uttered.

He was now beginning again.

What I am going to read,' he repeated, 'is designed for the poorest workmen. It is therefore put as simply as possible, and every point is ignored except those which are absolutely necessary. Mr. Stanley looks at me as if he would ask, Necessary for what? I mean, necessary for this—for showing the wage-slave what is the real relation between the results of his labour, the wages by which his labour is bought, and the profits of the employer who buys it—the profits, or what is just the same thing, the interest on the capital, the shares, the investments which that employer manipulates. Think of that,' exclaimed Foreman, his face growing gradually darker. 'Let every owner of personalty think of that! Let every owner of land, which is now merely the least objectionable form of personalty, think of that! And it will thus be seen that this little leaflet, these few little pages I am now going to read to you, go straight to the root of the existing social misery, and also,' he added, giving his voice a sarcastic calmness, 'of the existing social order. Well, I begin my Address thus:—

'Fellow-citizen, working-man—no matter what you work at, working with your hands for daily wages: Have you ever known what it is to want for anything—for a better meal, for a more wholesome lodging, for a bit of pleasure and leisure for yourself, your wife, and children? Are you ever discontented with the squalid court into which the window of your one room opens? Do you ever think that tough meat twice a week, and on most days a herring and a dry crust of bread, is not quite all that a hard day's work should earn, in this land of fabulous plenty? If so, consider this question. It concerns you very nearly.

'By what means do you live, if that can be called life which is only not starvation? The single dog's hole that you live in, the wretched food you eat, the very rags you stuff into the broken window-panes—to get even these you must give or sell something. They are not given to you out of good nature. Now, what is it that you do give or sell? Have you a

balance at your banker's? Have you an estate in the country? Beyond the clothes on your back and a few chairs and blankets, do you possess anything at all? And were all these sold, would they feed and lodge you for a week? Not they. Suppose that for a week you were thrown out of employment, what would your case be at the end of it? Would you have anything? Could any creature in the whole wide world be so wholly destitute, so wholly helpless as you?

'Do you see your nakedness? You possess absolutely nothing—nothing, and yet one thing. That thing is your labour—the power of your muscles, guided by the intelligence of your brain. It is your labour that you give and sell from day to day for your subsistence. Cease to labour, and if it were not for the workhouse you would die.

'And now turn from your own case—from your own one room—to that magnificent palace yonder. Look at the owner coming out of it, with a gorgeous flower in his button-hole, and about to enter his carriage. Consider him; take a good look at him. That man sleeps on the softest down. Every hour of the day, if he wishes it, he eats some costly dainty. He has thirty servants, who each eat more at a sitting than you do in two whole days. The cornice round one of that man's rooms has cost as much as will be the total of all your life's earnings. Here then is a second question for you: How does this man live? To get all these countless, these incredible luxuries, he too must give or sell something. Nobody gives them to him out of good nature. We will tell you what he gives or sells. It is the same thing—the very same thing that you do—it is LABOUR.

“Labour!” you exclaim: “he never did a stroke of work in his life. Do his puffy white hands, covered with rings, look like it?” My friend, you are quite right—he never did a stroke, as you say. Catch him! And yet what he gives in exchange for all these luxuries is Labour. It is all he has got to give—Labour. And it is Labour just such as yours—the power of muscle, guided by the intelligence of a brain. But he differs from you in this point, and in this

point only : the Labour he gives is not his own, but it is yours—yes, yours, and that of hundreds of others of your fellow-labourers. And how does he get this Labour, this use of your muscles and your intelligence? There is only one way in which he can possibly get it, and in that way he does get it. He STEALS it. How could he get it otherwise? Are you his property? What right has he to your Labour?

‘Perhaps a new idea like this frightens you. Perhaps you will say that this man lives on the profits of his capital. Well, if you like, you may say that; it is only a question of words. But we would advise you to use words which explain their meaning a little more clearly. We will give you some that do; and as to what our words mean, you will be in no doubt whatever. Capital—this Capital we hear so much about—is simply the thief’s name for Accumulated Labour; and profits, or interest, is simply the thief’s name for Stolen Labour.

‘Listen, friend. No doubt you have studied politics, and have heard a good deal about Party cries. Well, how does that which we have just said strike you as the material for a cry? Perhaps you have heard things like it in the speeches of various Radicals. If you have, it is only for this reason—that these Radicals, who profess to be such friends of yours, never mean what they say, and, in this case, have not understood what they say. How can we know this? you ask. We know it for a very good reason. The leaders of these same Radicals are the greatest Labour Thieves in England themselves, and, therefore, they cannot really be proclaiming to you the truth, which, if you once understood it, would put a stop to the entire work of their lives. The particular slave-driver who, you are no doubt told, will be in a few years the Radical Prime Minister, and whose own endeavours will be then to protect your interests, steals from you at the rate of three thousand pounds a month, and is always looking about for means which will enable him to go on stealing with greater and still greater security. He calls this looking for sound investments.

‘If, then, you think that a cry against the Labour Thieves

will be a good cry for the labouring classes to rally to, we agree with you. But do not confound it with the cries the Radicals offer you. Their cries, even if they sound like ours, have nothing in common with it but the sound. Their cries are clap-trap. Ours, which we offer you, is truth. Yes, my friend, truth. We do not commend it to you merely because it suggests hope to you, but because it is based on a truth which can be as clearly proved, and is as scientifically true, as any of those discoveries which have resulted in railways or the electric telegraph. The political economists will not like it. We do not expect they will; but in the course of a few years we shall have taught them to swallow it. At first it will startle them. It will startle them still more later on, when they see what is the result of your acting on it—when they see how very different their own lives are then, and how different yours are, too. We think that that will startle them.

‘This, then, is the great truth which we want you, as a working-man, as a man who works for an employer, to grasp. The profits of that employer, which make him a rich man, are simply thievings from your Labour, and he thieves from you in this way: He only pays you a quarter of what your Labour is worth. Every time he gives you five-and-twenty shillings you virtually have given him five pounds. You give him a five-pound note, and he professes to give you change for it. What he does give you is a sovereign and five shillings. He quietly pockets the rest, saying nothing to you about it. There you have his profits.

‘Think of this, and see if it is not true. Do not say it is true before you have examined it. We want you, before you get the idea fixed in your head, to thoroughly examine it, so as to be able to explain it and show your friends that it is no mere idle talk. When once you have seen it, it is the clearest thing in the world.’

‘Now,’ said Foreman, ‘looking up from his paper, ‘we are coming to the great theorem of Revolutionary Economics—a discovery hardly known to our *bourgeois* politicians, but one beside which, for its practical import to society,

those of Newton, of Darwin, of Watt himself, are insignificant. We come to Karl Marx's theorem as to the nature of profits or interest, or—to put the matter plainly—of the entire subsistence of the leisured and the propertied classes. This is the real dynamite that will shatter our existing civilisation—this single economic discovery. Recollect I am putting it here in the simplest way possible; and the land question—quite a secondary one—for the moment I omit altogether.'

'Come,' he went on, beginning again to read, '*take any case which as a workman you know by your own experience—one such case is just as good as another—in which you or your fellows make some given thing for a wage-payer. One example will be as good as a thousand.*

'*Let us take, say, a number of boots, which you are making for the owner of a large boot-shop. On what does that shopkeeper live, as he does live, in affluence? For he is affluent, compared with you, at any rate.*

'*Part of the answer is easy, and anybody can at once give it. He lives on the difference between what he gives you for making the boots and what his customers give him for them.*

'*Yes, but wait a bit. All that difference is not theft, and he does not live on the whole of it. Let us be quite just, and not jump too quickly at conclusions. The shopkeeper—let us put this point first—does some work on the boots, just as you do, before they are sold finally. He introduces your boots to the customer; he makes them marketable. This work is necessary, and he must be paid for it; though, as the work is easier than yours, he should, perhaps, be paid less. Of the difference, then, between the price he gets for the boots and the sum he pays you for making them we must credit him, to be generous, with a wage equal to yours. Be careful, however, to see what that means. It is faster work to sell boots than to make them, and he sells, we may suppose, in one day what it takes you six days to make. Thus, if the shopkeeper is to be fully occupied, he must employ six workmen, each of whom supplies him with boots for one day in the week. Since, then,*

he is entitled to the same weekly wage as you and your fellows, he is entitled, for selling your six days' Labour, to exactly one sixth of what he pays you for it. If he gives you, say, five shillings a day, he is entitled to five shillings a day himself. Thus, he is entitled to five shillings for selling what he pays you thirty shillings for making. You see, therefore, that what he pays you thirty shillings for making cannot possibly be sold to the customer for less than thirty-five shillings.

'It could not be sold for less. We must say more than that; it could not be sold for so little. Consider, the shopkeeper has to pay for the leather, and he has also to pay for his shop. The leather costs, we will say, as much as your own wages, namely, thirty shillings for the week; the rent of the shop for the day on which he sells your work is seven shillings. Here, then, is a total of thirty-seven shillings, which the shopkeeper, if he is to sell boots at all, must get back from the customer.

'Now, then, here is a little sum for you, which will explain your employer's position, so far as it has to do with you. Thirty shillings you receive for the making of so many boots; your employer must receive five shillings for selling them; he must receive, also, thirty shillings for the material which he has bought, and seven shillings for the day's use of the shop—making in all seventy-two shillings. That is the minimum for which the boots could be sold; and, were they sold for that, the shopkeeper would be earning exactly what you earn. He would be living as you live, in one squalid room, tasting meat only twice a week. But does he live like that? Not he, as you know well enough. You know where his snug villa is, with its greenhouse and its garden in front of it; and you have seen the chops and steaks which he has every day in the back parlour of his shop.

'Here at last we come to the practical question for you—for you, the man who has stitched the boots—you through whose sweat and weariness the leather has become boots at all. How is it your employer lives as he does live—live so much better than you? How does he get the money which enables him to do so? Let us see. Let us take a peep at his account-

books, and they, we rather fancy, will throw a little light on the subject.

‘His account-books tell us that he gets his money in this way— from selling the boots not for seventy-two shillings, but for a hundred and sixty shillings. Remember this too—he is able to sell the boots for that sum because they are worth it. If they were not worth it he could not get it. The competition of other shoemakers would pretty soon force his price down. Taking the shopkeepers of this country as a body, the average price charged by them, and got by them for their goods from the public, represents the value of those goods. Of those goods our boots are only a specimen.

‘How, then, do the boots come to have the value above stated? What item is there in the cost of producing and selling them that we have not yet considered? The rent of the shop is seven shillings, the leather costs thirty shillings—that is thirty-seven shillings. You merely have to add the shopkeeper’s own wage, five shillings, and your wage, thirty shillings, making in all seventy-two shillings; and yet the total result is a hundred and sixty shillings. There are eighty-eight shillings unaccounted for. Perhaps he bought the leather too cheap, or got his shop too cheap. Do you think that? Do landlords let their shops below the market price? Do leather-sellers let their customers have for thirty shillings what is really worth a hundred and eighteen? You know better than to believe that. Depend upon it your employer has paid for the house and the leather every penny that either of them is worth. Think! Do you smell a rat now? Does it not strike you that there may still be something for which he has not paid so honestly? There is only one thing left, and that thing is your Labour.

‘There you have it. There is the thing which the eighty-eight shillings comes from. Your Labour, with your employer’s added to it—for let us give the Devil his due, and let us remember his Labour also—this Labour is in reality worth, not thirty or thirty-five shillings, but it is worth a hundred and twenty-three shillings. Of this one sixth belongs to him.

What is one sixth of that? Twenty shillings and sixpence. Give him that, and have done with him; and then what remains for you? Five pounds two shillings and sixpence. That is your just share; not thirty shillings. Thus your employer, every time he pays your weekly wage, underpays you by the difference between these two sums. That is to say, he robs you of three pounds twelve shillings and sixpence. He robs you of it, he pockets it, and then calls it his profits.

'Turn this thought over in your mind. Think of it at leisure; think of it in the workshop. Think of it when you have not a penny in your pocket, when you are hungry, when your wife and little children are hungry. Think of it, above all, when your wages are being paid you. Every time your employer gives you thirty shillings, remember that you have in reality given him something like a five-pound note; and that he is pocketing, that he is robbing you of, some three pounds ten of your change.

'In speaking to you, we have supposed you were a shoemaker. It is no matter what you are or whom you work for. If you are a bricklayer, a journeyman tailor, a hand in a factory, it is all the same thing. You, and all your fellow wage-slaves, numbering in this country some twenty-seven millions, are all in the same case. The propertied classes—your employers—one and all rob you.

'This is a great subject. We cannot put the whole of it to you in one pamphlet, but this one thought—the thought that you are robbed, that the propertied classes live on robbing you, and that all the other wrongs which politicians say they will remedy are nothing if this wrong is not remedied—keep that in your own mind, and try to put it into the mind of your fellow wage-slaves; and remember, if you want any more information, you can have it at the office of the League of Social Democrats.

'If you would further your own cause, you are invited to join that League. The subscription is half a crown.'

'There!' exclaimed Foreman, dropping his paper and looking round him. 'Does that satisfy you? Does that

sound clear enough for you? I should like to know. Does it, or does it not?’

‘Do you really mean to say,’ exclaimed Lady Chislehurst, ‘that you are trying to disseminate ideas like these amongst the working-classes—to fill them with such horrible feelings of envy, hatred, and discontent?’

‘I do,’ said Foreman, bringing his hand down on the arm of his chair with a thump; ‘discontent with the lives they lead now, and hatred of those who force such a life upon them.’

‘Then,’ said Lady Chislehurst, ‘I must tell you I consider it very wicked of you. You like plain speaking, Mr. Foreman, so you must not object to it in me.’

‘Lady Chislehurst,’ said Mrs. Harley in a whisper, ‘don’t make him angry, for pity’s sake, or we shall have a scene in a moment. Haven’t you watched his eyes? They have the regular tint of madness in them, and can’t you see the excitement into which he’s read himself? Listen—listen now. Your friend Mr. Stanley is at him.’

Mr. Stanley was speaking with a gentle, an almost timid courtesy. ‘There was one point,’ he said, ‘in your paper, Mr. Foreman, on which I should like to question you. The wages paid to the supposed shoemaker, and the price of the leather used by him—were these real, or merely imaginary?’

‘The figures quoted,’ said Foreman, ‘were as a fact imaginary ones. What the real figures would be I neither know nor care. These were chosen because they were easy to work with. Their actual accuracy,’ he added brusquely, ‘matters nothing at all to the argument.’

‘Certainly not,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘nothing at all. And now may I ask you this? Given the wages which you imagine the workman to receive, was the proportion between those wages and the profits of the employer—between the thirty shillings and the three pounds twelve and sixpence—was that imaginary also? Or do you suppose it to represent a fact?’

Foreman stared at Mr. Stanley, not with anger exactly,

but with excitement. 'I don't,' he said, 'suppose anything at all in the matter. That does represent a fact. There is no reason for supposing there.'

'But how,' said Mr. Stanley, 'since you are not aware of the exact wages that prevail in the shoe trade, are you able to arrive at such exactness in this most important point?'

'In this way,' said Foreman, fumbling for something in his bag. 'In this way,' he went on, producing another leaflet. 'I will only read you a line or two. That will answer your question—'

'Workmen of England: consider the following figures. The annual income of this country is thirteen hundred millions. All those thirteen hundred millions are made by your labour. Who gets them? What becomes of them? This becomes of them. Ten hundred millions are appropriated, are nabbed, by your employers, the drones, the propertied classes. Three hundred millions only are left for you—for you—you, who have made the whole of it. Think of these figures. Think of them! Think of them!! Think of them!!!'

'There,' said Foreman, 'is the basis of my calculation as to the shoe trade. These figures show you the broad facts of the case. Take the workers of this country as a whole, and their employers—the drone-classes—as a whole; and the latter fleece the former to the tune of ten pounds out of every thirteen. In my case of the shoe trade, if I err at all, I err in putting the shopkeeper's legitimate gains too high.'

'May I,' said Miss Consuelo Burton, 'look at that last leaflet, Mr. Foreman?'

Surprise and gratification came into Foreman's eyes. He handed her the leaflet, and was about to begin addressing her, when an ill-timed remark from Lord Aiden completely diverted him from his intention.

'It seems,' said Lord Aiden, in an accent of lazy thoughtfulness, 'that you take no account of the interest yielded by capital.'

For a few moments Foreman was absolutely silent. He stared at Lord Aiden much in the same way as he had stared at Mr. Stanley; only this time his excitement was greater, and there seemed something in it almost ferocious. At last the storm broke.

'Interest!' he exclaimed, hissing with nervous vehemence. 'Capital bear interest! That is the very lie I am unmasking. It is the thief's lie—the swindler's lie. It is the lie on which the propertied classes repose, and under which the working classes are crushed. Interest, the swindlers tell you, is a plant that grows out of capital. Fools! It no more grows out of capital than corn grows from a spade. It grows out of labour as all wealth grows; and it is merely the name for the part of the growth you steal. Of course,' Foreman went on, his tone growing contemptuous rather than angry, 'to understand the matter scientifically, one must understand the nature of Values. But first let the workman digest the notion that he is plundered, and then if he is inclined to doubt it, we will take care to prove to him that his notion is correct.'

'My dear Lady Chislehurst,' Mrs. Harley was saying meanwhile, 'I believe all this no more than you do. Can't you see that the poor creature's a madman? Dangerous? Yes; no doubt this teaching is dangerous; but it's just as well to realise what it is.'

'I am sorry,' said Lady Chislehurst, 'that Consuelo thinks so, at any rate. That man seems quite to have bewitched her.'

Mrs. Harley looked to see if this observation was justified; and the *tableau* that met her view made her think that perhaps it was. Miss Consuelo Burton had risen from her seat, and, looking very pretty in the neatest of neat dresses, was standing by Foreman's chair, with one slim hand on the back of it, and her eyes and voice at once were making some request of him. 'Mr. Foreman,' she was saying, 'may I see that other paper of yours also—the one you first read out to

us? There are one or two things in it which I did not quite follow, I think.'

Foreman did not need to be asked twice. The look of ferocity died away from his face, and a gleam succeeded it of odd innocent vanity. He seemed quite subdued by the graceful form that bent over him, and the voice that, with all its timidity, had a subtle note of command in it. 'Keep the papers,' he said; 'you can have as many copies as you like. Here, too, is another, about "Value and Capital." You had better take that as well.'

She took the two papers, and retiring into a distant window, to Lady Chislehurst's horror, was at once completely absorbed in them.

'I think, Mr. Foreman,' said Mr. Stanley, 'that if I wished to teach your lesson to the working-classes, I should have administered the paper on Value as the first dose, not the second.'

'You do!' exclaimed Foreman, with a start of suspicious astonishment, which seemed partly caused by the priest's having any opinion on the matter, partly by his decided and calm way of expressing it. 'And may I venture to ask, sir, why?'

'But, Mr. Stanley,' said Lord Aiden, 'you would surely not personally be for teaching these theories to the working-classes at all?'

'I think,' said Mr. Stanley, 'that if you take these theories as a whole, in sober earnest, there are only two defects in them.'

'My dear sir,' said Foreman, 'you are very good, I am sure. But permit me to remark, you have not yet heard the whole of them—not even in outline; and even if you had, you could hardly pronounce on them, or even fully understand them, off-hand.'

'In that,' said Mr. Stanley, 'I am sure you are perfectly right, and I fear I must seem to you presumptuous, or perhaps even impertinent. But I assure you, Mr. Foreman, that I should not have ventured on my criticism if the

subject had not been one with which—if I may have your permission to say so—I am as familiar as you yourself are.’

Foreman sat up in his chair, bending his head forward. ‘Excuse me,’ he said, almost stuttering in his eagerness—‘excuse me, Mr. Stanley, but no one can be familiar with this subject we are speaking about who has studied social problems under Catholic—under clerical authorities. No one who has not mastered a work almost unknown in England—the epoch-making work of Karl Marx on “Capital”—no one, I say——’ he repeated, pausing with an air of triumph.

‘Again,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘I agree with you perfectly; for there is no work in the English language with which I am so familiar as that special work you refer to.’

‘The work I refer to,’ retorted Foreman, ‘happens to be in German, and no English translation has ever yet been published. I much fear we are talking at cross purposes.’

‘I think not,’ replied Mr. Stanley, smiling. ‘What I said just now was perhaps a slip of the tongue; and yet it was more accurate than you could know it to be. No English translation of Marx has been published—that is quite true. One has been made, however, and will be published shortly, with notes on the author’s fallacies.’

‘Indeed!’ said Foreman. ‘And may I ask you by what translator?’

‘Myself,’ said Mr. Stanley dryly.

Over Foreman’s face there came a dull cloud of mortification. He leant back again, and said with a forced air of indifference, ‘Perhaps, then, you will kindly tell me what are the two defects in the system of Karl Marx, which you spoke of.’

‘I charge Marx,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘with only one of them. I will talk about that presently. The other—forgive me for saying so—is an error which must be mainly your own. The figures you quote with regard to the distribution of wealth in this kingdom, and which you rely on to arouse

in the workman a sense of social injustice—they refer, I conclude, to the present time, do they not?’

‘They do,’ said Foreman, ‘and you are right—the figures are mine.’

‘Well,’ said Mr. Stanley, with almost apologetic civility, ‘if you will go into the matter a little more carefully, with a little method, and access to the best authorities, you will find that your present calculations are—and we should be thankful for it—so far in error that they do not represent even an approximation to the truth.’

The cloud upon Foreman’s face grew duller and more lowering. ‘Are you at all aware,’ he exclaimed, speaking with difficulty—‘are you at all aware who I am?—who it is who is sitting in this chair here? Perhaps you do not know that for the past ten years I have done nothing but study the misery of the working-classes—ay, Mr. Stanley, and in the very scenes and times of their misery; and not there only. I have ransacked your Blue-books and your Parliamentary returns, and with the aid of the first statistician in England I have ranged my facts and ranged my figures in order. There is only one other man in existence who knows as much of the subject as I do, and that is the man from whom my figures are taken. He, Mr. Stanley, is Mr. Charles Griffen, the statistical secretary to the Inland Revenue Office. Do you admit Mr. Griffen to be an authority? Or, possibly, you have never heard of him.’

‘No, no,’ said Mr. Stanley; ‘Mr. Griffen is a most undoubted authority!’

‘Well,’ said Foreman, ‘as I tell you, it is from him my figures are taken. They are taken from his various Abstracts and Essays, and are put together by myself. Mr. Griffen, you may not be aware, has from his official position sources of information almost unique in their completeness, and accessible to him alone. The results he is deducing from these are not yet made public. When they are, of course, they will be more detailed than mine; but nothing can make them differ from mine substantially, though what his

details will be we shall none of us know till he publishes them.'

'Do you know Mr. Griffen personally?' said Mr. Stanley.

'No,' replied Foreman.

'It happens,' said Mr. Stanley, 'that I do. I have been over the proofs of this very work of his you are alluding to; in fact, he was good enough to entrust me with the correction of them.'

'Figures,' exclaimed Foreman savagely, 'can be made to prove anything, that is to say on paper. Let me see Mr. Griffen's figures, and I will engage to make good my own case from them—let the figures be what they may. You come with me into the workman's quarters, and then doubt me if you can. Have I worked for ten years amongst the wage-slaves of England, and yet cannot be sure of the simple fact which I tell you—that out of every thirteen pounds the wage-slaves produce, the capitalistic classes rob them of ten pounds? That is, I repeat, the proportion, and no juggling with arithmetic can alter it.'

'Well,' said Mr. Stanley, 'since we cannot agree about England, let us turn to some other country. Do you consider that the same thing holds good everywhere? Does it hold good, for instance, in America? I am told that if the workmen in England get little, in America they get still less.'

'Less than ours in England?' said Foreman. 'If they did they would starve. In England the workmen live on starvation wages. Who will venture to tell you that anywhere they can live on less than that?'

'Let us reduce the affair to dollars,' said Mr. Stanley. 'In a dollar there are a hundred cents. Out of every dollar the English workman makes, the capitalist, according to you, takes about seventy-seven cents, and leaves him about twenty-three. Such is your computation. Well, in America, I am told that out of every dollar the workman makes, the capitalist takes ninety-four and leaves him six.'

‘What fool,’ exclaimed Foreman, ‘can have possibly told such stuff to you? And do you mean to say you believed it?’

‘No,’ said Mr. Stanley. ‘I have not admitted that. But the person who made the statement holds a position, and claims a species of knowledge not unlike your own. You spoke, Mr. Foreman, just now of Chicago. The person I quote from is a certain Heinrich Jungbluth, the leader and organiser of the Chicago band of Socialists. He has stated in a leaflet, very similar to yours, that the American workman, for every dollar he makes, gets himself exactly six cents.’

The fashion of Foreman’s countenance underwent a sudden change. His jaw fell. He appeared to be almost terrified.

‘Heinrich Jungbluth!’ he exclaimed. ‘And what do you know about Heinrich Jungbluth?’

‘Several things,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘if you care to hear them. He was a clerk originally in a commercial house in Paris, but was dismissed in consequence of some disgraceful scandal. Subsequently he came to America, and took a prominent part in the Pittsburg riots. At one time he was suspected of having forged a cheque. At another time he was sent to prison for a violent assault upon a woman. He is now the corresponding member of the League of Social Democrats, and is urging them at this moment to attempt some outbreak in London.’

‘Who are you?’ shouted Foreman. ‘Are you a Socialist yourself in disguise? Let me look at you. Have I ever seen you before?’

‘No,’ said Mr. Stanley. ‘I am a priest of the Catholic Church—a league, if you like to call it so, even more far-reaching than yours; and we, too, have our correspondents in all parts of the world. Let us say no more, however, about Herr Jungbluth’s character. I merely mentioned his statistics, which you say are impossible, to show you that Socialism does not always insure accuracy.’

‘God bless my soul, sir!’ said Foreman, ‘if you understand the matter so much better than I do, I can only say you had better become a Socialist yourself, since you tell me you are not one already.’

‘Let us forget,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘the point on which we differ personally. In spite of that even I would willingly be a Socialist, if it were not for the other fatal defect I spoke of—the defect in the theory, as apart from the statistics of Socialism.’

‘Well,’ said Foreman sulkily, ‘you seem so singularly conversant with the entire question that I cannot but be curious—very curious indeed—to learn from you what this fatal defect may be.’

‘Put briefly,’ said Mr. Stanley, who was now the centre of attention, ‘it is this : not that your theory is in any place inconsistent with itself, but that it is quite inapplicable to ordinary human nature. Were we all of us angels, your economic system would be perfect ; and if we lapsed afterwards into capitalists you might properly call us devils. As it is, we are men, with men’s powers and motives, which must be indeed controlled, but can never be fundamentally altered. If your economic system does not apply to these it applies to nothing, and has no practical meaning. What I say is, that your system does not apply to them. Allow me to ask you this : you are not a believer, I think, in what are called natural rights, are you?’

‘Certainly not,’ said Foreman. ‘Natural rights imply some supernatural sanction ; and whatever Socialists individually may think as to religious matters, their economic system has nothing to do with religion. Our basis is social rights, not any such nonsense as natural rights.’

‘Precisely,’ said Mr. Stanley. ‘Your position I think is this : men have no right to anything which they have no means of keeping ; and no right to anything which there is no possibility of their getting. Thus they have no right to any property in the wind, and they have no right to any property in the moon.’

‘Of course,’ said Foreman impatiently, ‘we all of us know that.’

‘Well, Mr. Foreman, let us now go to practical matters. Let me ask you if you agree to this : capital is essential to production—we may call it, in fact, the means of production—and, were capital destroyed altogether, the working-classes would suffer even more than they do from its being kept as it is, in the hands of a few capitalists.’

‘Naturally,’ said Foreman ; ‘that is the key to the whole position. Capital is not merely the means of production, it is the means of life ; and it is because the means of life have been monopolised by that small ring which we call the capitalists that these capitalists are able to dictate terms to the workers.’

‘That is to say,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘the workers must either starve, or work for the capitalists ; and the capitalists pay them, not what their work is worth, but only just enough of its worth to keep them in working order, and to make life seem a better thing than death to them. The remainder is appropriated—as you would say, stolen—by the capitalists ; and they are only able to steal it because they have monopolised the capital. Now, Mr. Foreman, if you put the case like that, up to this point I altogether agree with you.’

‘You do ?’ exclaimed Foreman. ‘Well, sir, and what next ?’

‘I agree with you, further,’ Mr. Stanley continued, ‘in this : could it be brought about that there were no such monopoly, and if the community possessed the capital in common, the workers would themselves receive the whole of what they have had a hand in producing. The capitalists, to borrow your language, would not be able to steal any profits from them. Here, then, we come, I think, to the sum of the Socialistic gospel—*the workers have a right to the capital of the community.*’

‘Certainly,’ said Foreman. ‘That is substantially what we say.’

‘Now here, at last,’ replied Mr. Stanley, ‘is the point where we part company. I say just the reverse. I say the capitalists have a right to what you call their thievings. I don’t expect to convince you ; but I can, if you will listen to me, explain to you what I mean, and at all events you will find in it something to think of. We agree—don’t we?—upon two points as to capital. It is necessary to the workers ; there is one point. It is accumulated labour ; there is the other point. Well, I say that the capitalists have a right to their thievings, because if it were not for the sake of these thievings the capital would never have been accumulated ; and that the workers at large have no right to the capital, because, if they seized on it, they would be unable to keep it. It has only—Mr. Foreman, pray let me finish what I am saying—capital has only been accumulated under the direction of a minority. It would begin to disappear the very moment it ceased to be properly administered ; and no one is able to administer it properly except those who are certain to profit by its administration. There, Mr. Foreman, you have my meaning in outline. If we were all equally clever and all equally industrious your theory would be perfect. The State would be Socialistic to-morrow. There is only one other supposition on which the same result would be possible.’

‘And what is that?’ said the voice of Miss Consuelo Burton, who had again joined the group, and for some time past had been listening.

‘It would be possible,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘if the average race of men were all of them to rise to heights of zeal and self-sacrifice to which saints and heroes at present find it very hard to attain. Will Mr. Foreman allow me to ask him one question more? The kind of life you contemplate in your Socialistic state is one of enjoyment, comfort, cheerfulness, and so forth, is it not? It does not, at all events, approach the gloom and the hard discipline of the severe monastic orders? Exactly. I thought so. I have known other men of views similar to yours, and they have all

declared that the asceticism of the Christian Church is little less than a blasphemy against our healthy human nature.'

'How can Mr. Stanley allude to such opinions in such company?' Lady Chislehurst said to herself in a troubled, half-audible murmur.

'Fasting, for instance, and celibacy,' Mr. Stanley was meanwhile proceeding, 'the violent mortification, and, above all, the suppression of any natural appetite, men of Mr. Foreman's school think terrible—tending, in fact, to produce every form of evil.'

'There,' said Foreman dryly, 'you do me complete justice.'

'You are doubtless aware, Mr. Foreman, that this discipline in its severest form is regarded by the Catholic Church as fitted only for a very small fraction of mankind. What I want to say to you is, that the severest discipline ever devised for any handful of monks does far less violence to our average human nature than the change in it which your system would require to be universal. It would be easier, far easier, to make men Trappists than Socialists.'

Foreman had come to the château expecting some discussion, and he was fully prepared to startle and horrify everybody. Some cross-questionings, some panic-stricken contradictions, he anticipated; and he pictured himself like a war-horse riding them down and dispersing them. But that he should meet with any one to whom his arguments were familiar beforehand, and who, instead of being frightened and shocked at them, was able to dispute them in detail, and make him exchange his thundering rhetorical charge for a slow argumentative walk, in which he was answered at every step for such a contingency he was utterly unprepared; and he now sat feeling almost as dizzy as if his chair had suddenly broken and he had fallen forcibly on the floor.

In this state of mind, though he hated footmen on principle, he had never been so near to thinking he had seen an

angel as he was now, at the entrance of Lady Mangotsfield's attendant, who threw the whole question of the rights of the masses into the background, by the announcement that her ladyship was at breakfast in the east *salon*, and before her departure, in half an hour's time, would be very much pleased to say good-bye to her friends. 'I was to say,' the man added, 'that her ladyship particularly hopes that Mr. Foreman will see her ladyship.'

At this last announcement a smile went the round of the company, in which Foreman himself joined, though with anything but good humour. He had by this time recovered his self-possession; and though he had not by any means collected and got into fighting order his arguments, which had been scattered by Mr. Stanley's attack to the farthest confines of his mind, he found himself fortified by a fit of gathering anger, and this showed itself at the very first opportunity. The party were now preparing to break up; but the subject just discussed still held their attention; and Lord Aiden, turning to Foreman, said in a conciliatory way:—

'Of course the practical point for us who do not agree with you is not so much whether your opinions are true, as whether they are in reality spreading much amongst the people.'

'You are right there, my lord,' said Foreman; 'and the rate at which these opinions spread amongst the people varies with the acuteness of industrial distress or depression. I'm not a man who is squeamish about a simile, and I don't mind saying that Socialism is for all the world like yellow fever or the cholera. It is propagated by germs; only in this case the germs are knowledge, often disseminated in the form of mere leaflets. What I have just read you is one of them. I think, Mr. Stanley, you will by-and-by have a practical lesson as to whether Socialism is really inapplicable to ordinary human nature or not. Listen: can you deny this? Take any audience of working-men you like—let them call themselves Radicals, let them call themselves

Conservatives—what they are really brooding over is a sense of the same social injustice. They feel it, but they can't define it. Socialism defines it for them. When they realise the definition then the disease is taken.'

'Your similes,' said Harley, 'don't flatter your arguments.'

'They don't,' said Foreman; 'they are not meant to do so. You don't flatter the devil if you want to describe him, do you? And from your point of view—I am quite aware of this—my opinions are far uglier than any devil you believe in. Yes,' exclaimed Foreman, 'and they'll be playing the devil soon, inapplicable as they are to average human nature, with most of the things that propertied human nature lives by.'

'My dear Foreman,' exclaimed Harley, with a genial burst of laughter, 'upon my word you are quite delightful.'

Foreman was in no mood to be joked with by even his oldest friends. He sat up in his chair like an adder about to spring.

'Come,' said Lady Chislehurst, carefully looking away from him, 'Mr. Carew is gone to Lady Mangotsfield; let us all of us go, too.'

'Listen!' exclaimed Foreman, in a voice that suddenly arrested them; 'before you go, let me tell you all this: and before a fortnight's over you will see whether I am a liar or no. By that time Socialism will either speak with fifteen mouths at St. Stephen's, or it will be speaking with a great many more, and with louder mouths, in the streets!'

At this moment the door of the room opened, and a tremulous but distinct voice was heard outside in the passage. 'Mr. Carew,' it was saying, 'and where is that odd creature—poor Lord B——'s Conservative? He goes back to Nice himself, don't he, to-day? Tell him to come in my carriage, and I'll give a little advice to him.'

Lady Chislehurst rustled towards the door with the instinctive intention of arresting Lady Mangotsfield's remarks about a person who could hear every word of them.

It may safely be said, however, that she did not break her heart when, before she could accomplish her purpose, Lady Mangotsfield went on again, and said in a voice that must have been still more distinct to Foreman, ‘Of course if people of that sort must meddle in politics it’s all the better that they should be on the right side ; but I often think of what I once said to my gardener, who was always teasing me with the ardour of his Tory principles. “Macdonald,” I said, “I’m very glad you have sound opinions ; but I’d far rather that you had no opinions at all.”’

CHAPTER XI.

PONDERING IN HER HEART.

LADY MANGOTSFIELD was gone. Foreman was going. With Lady Mangotsfield he was not in the least angry. He was even pleased with the view which she took of his own position—a view which to him was as picturesque as a ruined castle, and as harmless. He had no inclination, however, for the high honour of travelling with her ; and as soon as ever her post-chaise had departed, his own humble vehicle drew up at the archway. It was close upon one o’clock. He was begged to stay to luncheon ; but the prophetic rage, which was not quite devoid of sullenness, was upon him ; and, putting a constraint on his appetite, although it happened to be voracious, he declined all refreshments except a few solitary biscuits ; and even the dust of these, as he went, shook off as a testimony.

‘Well,’ said Mrs. Harley, who walked out with him to the carriage, ‘I think, Mr. Foreman, you have met your match to-day.’

‘I suppose,’ he said, ‘you are alluding to that priest. I was certainly surprised to find that he knows as much of the question as he does ; though I could show him, if I had the time, that he knows rather less than he thinks. As for the

others—I don't suppose there is one of them who has thought enough to have any real opinion about it at all.'

'And so,' said Carew at luncheon, 'the prophet has come and gone!'

There was an inexpressible relief amongst all present at the thought; and Carew and Mrs. Harley began to congratulate each other that things had not gone off as badly as they easily might have done.

'Don't you think,' interposed Lady Chislehurst, 'that he's a very horrible man? If he's as bad as he makes himself out to be, he is little better than a criminal. He's trying to bring about those very horrors which he pretends to think are inevitable.'

'He's a product,' said Mr. Stanley, 'of many social conditions, and represents—depend upon it—certain very important forces. I have long watched the ways of the Socialists carefully, but had not come across Mr. Foreman's track before.'

'My dear Mr. Stanley,' said Lady Chislehurst, 'you don't really think that these men can do anything?'

'I,' said Carew, 'am not at all so certain of that. In London alone they have every material for a rising; and they may make a massacre, though they will never make a millennium. Mrs. Harley, what wine are you drinking?'

'I must confess,' said Lady Chislehurst, 'you take things very coolly, Mr. Carew.'

'After all,' he said, 'what does it matter? Life as it is—apart from religion, I mean—is a bad thing at the best; and human beings are contemptible little animals.'

'And yet,' said Miss Consuelo Burton, 'you think so much of an aristocracy—you think them, Mr. Carew, such a very superior order of beings.'

'Everything,' said Carew, 'is comparative. They are clean when compared to dirt. An aristocracy—this at least is what I feel—is the best of all possible orders in the worst of all possible worlds.'

'And so,' said Mrs. Harley, 'the people are dirt, are

they? I thought, Mr. Carew, you were so devoted to improving their condition.'

'They are only dirt,' said Carew, 'when they seize on power. We are dirt when we relinquish it. Soup is dirt on your pocket-handkerchief; your pocket-handkerchief is dirt in the soup-tureen.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Harley, 'if those are your political opinions, there won't be very much power, in these popular days, for you.'

'They are not my opinions,' said Carew; 'they are my feelings—which is a very different thing. My political opinions are my political feelings criticised.'

During the rest of luncheon Miss Consuelo Burton was silent. Whether Foreman was right or no with regard to most of the others, when he said that as to his views they had no real opinion, with regard to Miss Consuelo he was certainly quite wrong. She had an opinion that was very real indeed, and with that tact which rarely deserts a woman until she is so much in love that her happiness hangs upon its exercise, she contrived, during the course of a walk in the afternoon, to secure Mr. Stanley for a time as her sole companion, on purpose to communicate this opinion to him.

In all the landscape commanded by the ramparts of the château, the most singular object, perhaps, was a certain solitary tower which rose out of the foliage of a semi-precipitous forest, and seemed to be guarding the entrance to a winding valley. It was the one remnant of a stronghold that had formerly belonged to the Templars; and it had been partly repaired by the Comte de Courbon-Loubet, and converted by him into a memorial to his lost children. Its distance from the château was not more than two miles, and as soon as the party had recovered from the lulling effects of luncheon, it was to this tower they all set out on foot.

Mr. Stanley and his companion were the first to arrive; and whilst the others were still far below them, waging a dilatory battle with the thick and refractory underwood, they themselves were already quietly seated at the top of a flight of

steps by which the base of the tower was reached. They exchanged a few remarks about the building and the scene around them. Then Miss Consuelo abruptly changed the subject, and said, somewhat to Mr. Stanley's surprise :—

‘I saw the other day an odd thing in a newspaper. I saw that of all the kinds of books published in England annually, those on religion were by far the most numerous. The reason is, I suppose, that although the subject is dry, yet, to those who care at all for it, it is the most important subject in life.’

‘One is,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘sometimes apt to forget what an enormous body the reading public is, and that only a small section of it reads mainly for amusement. The bulk of the middle and lower middle classes, when they do read, read with the serious aim of instructing themselves.’

‘I'm not surprised,’ said Miss Consuelo, ‘that so dry a subject should be popular ; but that the general public doesn't take to a dryer one. If I were the general public, I know I would. I would think about nothing else—nothing, nothing, nothing ! I would,’ she exclaimed, as if carried away by her feelings—‘I would shut up all my books on religion ; and—and this other subject—till I knew and felt at rest about it, I could never open any one of them again.’

Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes were fixed on the priest. She seemed to be half afraid of the words she had just spoken. ‘Tell me,’ he said, ‘and what subject is this, which is so much more important to your own life than religion is?’

She paused for a moment as if not quite sure of her voice. At last she spoke, and there came into her eyes as she did so a spark of vanishing laughter. ‘Of course,’ she began, ‘when I tell it to you, it sounds not only wicked but ridiculous. The subject I mean is—don't laugh at me—it is Political Economy.’

Mr. Stanley looked at her, with a smile that was certainly not one of ridicule.

‘What was the man's name,’ she went on, ‘that you

and Mr. Foreman talked about? Karl Marx—yes, that's it. Why don't people in general study books like his, and see if they're true or not, or how far they are true? I know that Political Economy is called the dismal science. I know that it sounds wicked to put it before religion. But I don't mean wickedness, if you only knew my meaning. To me it would not be dismal, let it be never so dry and hard; for it would tell me one thing, which I must be set at rest about before religion can ever tell me anything. And yet—it seems to me that language must all be wrong. It is religion—the very thing I am thinking about. It is part of it—it must be.'

'Go on,' said Mr. Stanley, 'tell me your meaning. Whatever it is, I am sure you don't mean wickedness. What is this that you wish to be set at rest about?'

'Religion,' she said, 'you will, of course, tell me is the first thing. If I felt it was not I should be a bad Catholic. Well, what does Religion, what does the Church teach me? Mr. Stanley, doesn't it teach me this—how to act under the circumstances in which I have been placed? Of course it does: but the thing I want to know is, have I any right to remain under those circumstances?'

'Go on,' said the priest. 'Don't be afraid of what you are thinking. Explain yourself a little more fully.'

She looked at him with a wistful inquiry, something as a dog might. 'Are you understanding me?' she said. 'Tell me. Or have I merely muddled myself with a dream? I am richer than other people. Have I any right to be so? Am I a robber—are we all of us robbers? Have we any business to be in the position we occupy? Oh, if you knew how, in some shape or other, some thought like this has been haunting me—I can't tell for how long! Often at balls last season I found myself thinking during supper of the hungry faces I had seen in the street outside. I once went over Mr. Snapper's manufactory, and watched the faces of the poor men working there. They no doubt had quite enough to eat; but in their looks, in their attitudes—I can

see them at this moment—there seemed a reproach to me or a claim on me, I could not tell which. I have always felt when I heard of popular politics—and at home, as you know, we don't hear much, still we hear something—I have always felt that there was something in the background which no one had the courage to recognise ; and now to-day I have heard it put into words. When Mr. Foreman was talking, I couldn't understand it all ; but offensive as he was in many ways, and strange as his wording was to me, it somehow seemed to be what I had unconsciously been waiting for. We are the cause, he said, we and the world we live in, of all the blight we see in the lives below us. Is that so? Are we? We must know that—surely we must—before our minds can be satisfied. Where does our duty lie—in which of these two opposite things—in renouncing our position or in using it? There, Mr. Stanley—I have spoken straight out now. There is the question which seems to me, every day when I am saying my prayers, to come far before those questions which are commonly called religious. Am I wrong? Tell me if I am wrong.'

'My child,' he said, 'you are not. You are profoundly right. Political economy, and the social conditions of labour, have become in our day indeed a part of theology—its youngest branch ; and as such, I, a priest, have studied it. Yes, this question that troubles you is the one great question for those whose hearts God has moved to ask it. Every age has its riddle, and this riddle is ours. I, perhaps, may be able to give some help to you.'

'Oh,' she said quietly, 'but you have helped me already. I listened to every word you said this morning ; and I mainly understood Mr. Foreman from the way in which you argued with him. Oh, indeed you have helped me. Listen : the others are coming. I hear them in the wood under us. But before they come let me ask you one thing more. Let me say what I think you mean, and you tell me if I am correct.'

'Tell me,' he said. 'There is still time.'

‘You don’t believe, then, do you,’ she said hurriedly, ‘that all riches are robbery—that you and I, for instance, are living on stolen goods because we are staying at a castle—or because I give five shillings, say, for a pair of gloves? You mean that the talents which produce money and so on—all those things that Mr. Foreman wishes to take from us—depend on the workings of our average human appetites; that is to say, these talents would never be developed at all if it were not in the nature of things that those fortunate few who possess them, should possess also the riches which result from their exercise. Is not that what you mean?’

‘Exactly,’ said Mr. Stanley. ‘In considering human actions we must always remember this. The natural reward causes the effort, just as much as the effort wins the reward: and the Church, in its message to the world in general, never assumes for a moment that these natural rewards can be dispensed with. She enjoins not the extinction of the desire for them, but simply the regulation of it. The desire itself is presupposed as permanent. I am, of course, not speaking of the counsels of perfection.’

‘No,’ she said, ‘but it was about those I was thinking.’

‘You must remember,’ he answered, ‘that they, in their very nature, are addressed to a few only. They are plainly not addressed to society as a society; for a society that followed them could not continue to exist.’

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘but let us keep to the one matter we are talking about. Suppose all the men on whom the progress of industry depends had grace given them to forego the natural reward of their exertions—suppose they were still to make the same enormous profits, but instead of taking them, as they now do, for themselves, were to willingly hand them over for the general good—then there might be a state like that Mr. Foreman dreams about. Is not that so?’

‘True,’ said Mr. Stanley. ‘But think of this. Such a change must in its very nature be voluntary—more than voluntary: it must be enthusiastic. It would have to come

from the inner movements of men's spirits. We are little likely to see such a change as that.'

'Not in the world at large—no. But it might—surely this is possible—take place in some. Some might still make the exertion, develop all their faculties, and yet forego the natural reward. They might extend commerce, they might develop manufactures, as if they were doing so under some monastic vow—some vow of poverty with a modern meaning in it. It is at least conceivable that they might do so; and if they did—well, I want to know, wouldn't they be doing good?'

'No doubt,' he said, 'if they acted thus they would.'

'Thank you,' she said; 'what I wished to ask you is answered.'

She rose from where she was sitting, and moved a few paces away from him; and, looking down into the depths of the wood below, began to trifle with the grass that grew on a ruined parapet. She was standing thus when the rest of the party arrived; and as she turned unwillingly round to confront them there was a curious something in her whole air and expression which caught, in an instant, Carew's experienced eye. 'If,' he exclaimed to himself, 'she had had any other companion, I should think she had just been listening to a declaration of love.' She, too, on her side, had seen the way in which he looked at her; and though she had no time to inquire nicely into causes, she felt that for a second her heart beat quicker than usual. She felt, too, that she blushed; and the blush was still on her cheeks when, a few moments later, history began to repeat itself, and Carew was again her companion on her way home.

'You seemed,' he said to her presently, 'to be having an interesting conversation just now, when we interrupted you.'

'When you came,' she said, 'I was not talking—I was thinking.'

'Will you tell me,' he asked, 'what your thoughts were? Were you thinking about what we heard this morning?'

'I was thinking,' she said, 'of something that will alter

my whole life, perhaps.' She stopped short abruptly, and walked on in silence, Carew meanwhile from time to time watching her. Presently she began again, taking up her former sentence, as if unconscious there had been any pause in her speaking. 'And yet,' she said, 'who can tell? Perhaps by next season I shall have forgotten all about it, and be thinking of nothing but balls and new ball-dresses. Do you think that's likely?' she went on, with a little nervous laugh. 'Or perhaps you don't know me well enough to be able to form an opinion.'

'I don't know,' said Carew, 'what it is you are speaking about ; but about you I know, or at least believe, one thing. You will never be satisfied until you have seen the Right ; and when you have seen it you will never be untrue to it. That is my belief about you ; it is more than that—it is my faith.'

She looked up at him with a soft startled stare. 'Your faith about me !' she exclaimed. 'What grounds can you possibly have for a faith about me of that kind ?'

'You yourself are the grounds,' he said. 'I know of none other. Do you remember yesterday, when you said something about the Mass, and I told you it shocked me? That was because of my faith in you. But this morning—you didn't see me—I was in chapel, though, watching you—this morning, the faith which you had shocked was much more than made whole again. I saw that the Mass was not to you what you said it was. It was not outside your inner life, but a part of it. Let me say to you just what I think. Let me think aloud to you, without either of us feeling embarrassed. Religion and faith are not things about which one pays silly compliments, and I am merely telling you what I mean and feel. It can do you no harm to hear it ; perhaps it may do you good. Look at me,' he said, stopping in his walk suddenly ; 'is the sun shining on my face, or do the trees hide it ?'

'The sun shining on your face ? Yes—not in your eyes, but on your cheeks.'

‘I couldn’t have known that if you hadn’t told me.’

‘Naturally,’ she said. ‘You can’t see your own face without a looking-glass.’

Carew suddenly turned to her with a look of earnestness. ‘Then I could see,’ he began, ‘although you could not see——’ But then his voice faltered. He lowered his eyes and he looked away from her.

‘Tell me,’ she said gently, ‘what could you see?’

‘I could see on your face and in your eyes this morning “The light that never was on sea or land.” Come, let us move on.’

They resumed their walk in silence, which was for some time broken by nothing but an occasional sound of Carew’s stick on a bramble. Presently, however, they emerged from a dense thicket, and the château all of a sudden came full into view before them, with its tower, its gardens, and its ramparts, crowning the hill opposite. There were some exclamations from both of them at the singular picturesqueness of the sight ; and then Miss Consuelo turned to Carew and said, a trifle brusquely, ‘You like to live in a castle, don’t you?’

‘How do you mean?’ he said.

‘I mean, you like to lead a life that separates you not only from the vulgar rich—of course you like that—but from the common lot of men and women in general?’

‘For riches merely as riches,’ replied Carew evasively, ‘I care little or nothing. I would sooner eat a dinner of herbs with gentlemen than a stalled ox with people—well, with people of no family.’

‘Yes, but if gentlemen are to hold their heads up in the world, there are certain surroundings which you think are due to them, to which morally they have a birthright ; and you yourself like to be surrounded by these. You would not like to renounce them?’

‘To me,’ he said, ‘they are symbols—they are not luxuries.’

‘What,’ she exclaimed, suddenly brightening into a

wayward laugh, 'do you lounge in a soft arm-chair to show the length of your pedigree?'

Carew laughed too ; and until they reached the château the conversation lapsed into a less serious tone. Both, however, still were aware of serious thoughts beneath it ; and when they were standing in the archway waiting for the others, Miss Consuelo again said in something of her former manner, 'Yes, this is the sort of thing you like—this stately seclusion, these battlements, these great coats-of-arms——'

'Well,' he said, 'and what are all these but signs? Would you like yourself to renounce the thing they signify?'

'No,' she said ; 'on that point I feel just as you do. It is partly for what they signify that I would renounce the present signs. I should find new ones. What we have now I would sacrifice.'

'Tell me,' said Carew, 'what are the exact things you are thinking of.'

She looked at him as if she but half heard his question—as if her thoughts were wandering ; and her words, when she spoke, seemed little more than a ripple on the surface of a silent meditation. 'Many things,' she said ; 'not only houses and lands and servants—other things, too—poetry, books, drawing, self-development—perhaps other things—all the unwritten poems of which one's own soul is the heroine. I think all this is involved in the thought I have received to-day. But I can't tell,' she said, rousing herself—'I can't tell yet. That thought is like one of my own travelling-trunks. It will take a long time to unpack.'

'Will you not,' said Carew, 'let me help you in unpacking it?'

'Perhaps some day,' she replied, 'perhaps never.' Then, with a little brusque movement of the head, she looked him in the eyes for a moment, and said, 'If any one helps me you shall.' The words were hardly uttered when a deep blush covered her cheeks, and changing her manner with a

strong effort, she went on almost flippantly, 'But you wouldn't like the task. No, no ; these are the surroundings for you. You will live and die with liveried servants waiting on you. You are quite right about yourself. The people, for you, are dirt.'

'See,' said Carew, 'here come Lady Chislehurst and the others. I have something to say to them. Will you all of you,' he went on, 'come now with me, and I will show you what I said I would—how I occupy my solitude here. Perhaps,' and he turned again to Miss Consuelo Burton, 'you will find in this a reply to what you have just said.'

Carew led his guests, who were delighted at his proposal, into a side of the *château* which they had none of them yet visited ; and they presently entered a suite of small sitting-rooms, opening one into the other after the fashion of old houses.

'When,' he said, 'I was unpacking my books and papers, and wondering how on earth I should ever sort and arrange them, this little row of rooms struck me all at once as a god-send. I have consecrated one of them exclusively to each of my several tastes, or perhaps I should say more properly, of the several interests of my life. In this room—you see I have not used it much—in this room are all my poets, dramatists, novelists, and so on ; everything, in fact, that you call literature proper. Now come into the next. Here are all my books on philosophy and religion.'

'This room,' said Lady Chislehurst with approbation, 'looks more lived-in than the other. And—ah, I see you have all the great Catholic writers—nearly all are Catholic ; and here is Mr. Stanley's book on the life of the Angelical Doctor. But that table, Mr. Carew, has not been sat at lately ; or else your French housemaids are very bad hands at dusting.'

'Well,' said Carew, 'now come into the third room.'

An exclamation burst from several voices, and Harley said, expressing the meaning of all of them, 'Well now, Carew, we have got to your den at last.'

And a den indeed it was. Along the walls, on rudely constructed shelves, were rows upon rows of books, many of them bound in paper, whilst the floor was piled with reports and pamphlets, and official-looking folio-sheets covered with tabulated statistics. At each of the two windows there was, moreover, a writing-desk, and each of these desks was plainly in present use. The visitors slowly inspected the contents of the curiously unornamental library; and volume after volume as they went the round of the room was seen directly or indirectly to deal with the same subject. Political Economy, and the social conditions of labour—the subject was that; the subject was that only. English, German, French, and American manuals all were here; and still more numerous were rows of Reports and Blue-books.

‘Here,’ said Carew at last, ‘is the scene of my daily life. My solitude is a nut, and here you get to the kernel of it. There is hardly a book, Mrs. Harley, of any present influence either in Europe or America, dealing with the labour question, or the land question, which I have not got here; and I have also done my best to get all the most reliable accounts, official or otherwise, of the way the workers live in various countries, and their comparative comfort or misery at various periods. I am trying to reduce a number of my results to writing.’

‘And who,’ said Lady Chislehurst, ‘sits at that other desk? Do you keep an amanuensis?’

‘There he is,’ said Carew, pointing to Mr. Stanley, ‘or rather I am his. He this week is correcting, and I am helping him to correct, the proof-sheets of Mr. Griffen’s work, which our poor friend Foreman was looking forward to as a new revelation. Now, Lady Chislehurst, I have made my confessions to our Society, as my contribution to its inaugural meeting.’

‘I hope,’ she said as they returned to the room adjoining, ‘that you have not abandoned this room—the room of your theologians.’

‘At any rate,’ said Carew, ‘I have passed to the other

through this ; and to this, you see, I return, whenever I leave the other.'

Late in the evening, shortly before the party separated, he said in a low voice to Miss Consuelo Burton, 'And do you think that I care nothing about the people now?'

'No,' she replied, 'what I said I unsay.'

'And will you do this?' said Carew. 'One thing which you said—will you now say it over again? Will you say again, "If any one ever helps me, you shall"—will you say that?'

'Yes,' she murmured, 'I say it.'

That night, in her room, before she retired to bed, she opened a large despatch-box and took out a number of papers from it. She put these before her on the writing-table, and she sat for a long time pensively looking over them. Her head rested on her hand as if wearily ; a half-contemptuous smile flickered about her mouth ; once or twice she gave a little cold soft laugh ; once or twice too a sigh escaped her. The papers were all in manuscript ; part was prose, part was verse. It was all of her own composition. She had never shown it to any one, or ventured to hope that it could be of any value to others ; but it had been for her like a hidden store of honey, which she had secreted from time to time, obeying a natural impulse. To another reader she knew that the words might convey little ; but to her, when she wrote them, they were like so many constellations of stars marking and fixing the figures created by her own imagination. In the case of the verse, it was the same, too, with regard to their melody. They were like notes in a copy of music, which only she could read, and which could be played only on the instrument of her own mind.

To-night they still charmed her, but not as formerly. There was a difference. The thoughts, the sentiments, which it once so pleased her to chronicle, were now dear to her only as the toys of a lost childhood. With the mere melody it was otherwise. That, as she read, seemed sonorous and satisfying as ever. It was as though she were herself singing to herself, and she turned the pages regretfully as if the sound

fascinated her. But no sooner had she come to the last page than, rising from her seat, she gathered them all together, and then, moving towards the chimney, carefully placed them across the iron dogs and set fire to them. She stood looking at them, as a mother might look at a dead child, whilst they burned slowly. Then, when the last blue flames were flickering faint amongst the folded embers, she pressed her hands tightly across her eyes ; her lips quivered a little, and she murmured half aloud, 'What is poetry or the poetry of life to me !'

Lord Aiden and Carew, on the terrace just below her, were meanwhile pacing up and down together, smoking their cigarettes, whilst the stars glittered above them. Lord Aiden, who, in spite of his dilettante languor, was really touched by poetry more deeply than by anything, and had always escaped to it as a refuge from imperial politics and diplomacy, repeated in Greek that loveliest of all Greek epigrams, of which the following is a widely known translation—

My love, thou gazest on the skies :
Ah, would that I might be
Those skies, with all their thousand eyes,
That I might gaze at thee !

'We were talking the other night,' he went on, 'about the inversion of similes. I have often thought that we might invert the whole thought of that poem. Some men are constant not to a woman but womanhood, and instead of seeing in the skies an image of themselves as they would wish to be, they see in them the image of womanhood as it actually is. They do not wish for a thousand eyes to look at any one woman ; but they see the same mysterious inexhaustible charm of womanhood everywhere looking out of a thousand eyes at them. They are pantheists in love, and they are not inconstant though they seem to be.'

'I,' said Carew, 'hitherto have been a pantheist somewhat of that kind ; but no woman could ever move me now, unless we both clung together to a something beyond ourselves.'

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

A SEEKER FOR TRUTH SHIPWRECKED.

A FEW days later the château was dull and silent ; and Carew once more was alone in it. Indoors, on his desk, his books and papers invited him ; outside, the sun was shining brightly as ever : but nothing pleased or satisfied him as it had done formerly. It is not surprising, when a house has been full of guests, if the host who remains behind should feel depressed by the solitude ; but Carew's depression did not arise from this. The mere absence of his friends he could have borne with perfect composure ; and the thing that weighed upon him was not that these friends were gone, but the peculiar circumstances which had attended the going of one of them.

On Sunday night he had persuaded the whole party to stay on with him at least till Tuesday ; and Monday was to be occupied in some picturesque excursion, a prospect which filled Miss Consuelo Burton with pleasure.

But on Monday morning, soon after the post arrived, Mrs. Harley had come to him with an odd look in her face, and informed him, in a manner not far from embarrassment, that she had just had a letter from the eldest Miss Burton.

'Who has been telling her things,' said Mrs. Harley, 'I am sure I don't know ; but she has heard already—she must have heard it yesterday—that Consuelo has been meeting Foreman here. She is very much annoyed about it, and wishes her to come back immediately. Consuelo, poor child, has had a letter from her, too. She won't show it to

me ; but I can see it is disagreeable. Has Elfrida not written to you ?’

Carew drew from his pocket a number of unopened envelopes. ‘I will look,’ he said. ‘Yes, this must be hers.’

It was a note couched in the coldest terms of civility. ‘When I allowed my sister,’ it said, ‘to come to your house, I did so believing that she would be safe from meeting a person whose opinions and character are notoriously offensive to her family, and with whom they could never allow her to associate for an instant. Since this, however, proves not to have been the case, it will hardly surprise you that I have asked Mrs. Harley to arrange for my sister’s return at the earliest moment possible ; and we are sending a carriage to fetch her, which, so far as we can ascertain, will arrive at your house very nearly as soon as this letter.’

‘I can never,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘let her go back alone. I am more sorry than I can say to leave you in this way. George, of course, can remain ; but I, you will see yourself, must really go back with her ; and I have no doubt that the moment I see Elfrida I shall be able to show her that you have been not to blame.’

To this Carew could offer no opposition ; indeed, annoyed as he was at the whole incident, what he felt most was the position of Miss Consuelo herself. ‘Where is she ?’ he asked Mrs. Harley. ‘I should like to speak to her.’

‘She is in her room,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘getting ready to start ; and I must go too. Poor child, she is painfully troubled ; and the instant the carriage comes she begged we might be off. For aught I know, it may be here already.’

He saw neither of the two ladies again till a minute or two before their departure. He had no opportunity of saying one word to Miss Consuelo privately ; and indeed, till he was actually seeing them into the carriage he was unable to do as much as catch her eye for a moment. At last he did this in the act of saying ‘Good-bye’ to her ; and what was his sensation then ? What emotions were they that

he read in the look she turned on him? Was sympathy there? Was there any feeling of friendliness? To his surprise, there was nothing but a frigid stare of indifference; and when he proceeded, before his surprise had overpowered him, to murmur some hope of their very soon meeting again, she merely replied with a civil conventional little laugh, 'I'm rather afraid we are going to leave Nice presently.'

As to the question of Foreman, he talked that over with Mr. Stanley, and he had little doubt that that would be soon explained. He wrote Miss Burton a letter about it; and felt fully able to clear himself. On that score he was soon at ease. But his mind was full of some dim foreboding consciousness that there was something behind, which he had not yet arrived at; and all through the time that the rest of his friends remained with him, he was haunted and stung by the thought of this unexplained parting. The day after it, he had sent Miss Consuelo a line or two, to say simply how he hoped he had not offended her; and now that his guests were gone, and there was nothing whatever to distract him, he was pacing after breakfast up and down the ramparts, wondering if the post would bring him any, or what, answer.

Absorbing, however, as this thought was, it left room in his mind for others of a more important nature; indeed the excitement caused by it seemed to compel their presence. His old desponding impression that the existing social world, with its soil of centuries, in which all his life was rooted, and with which alone he could conceive himself as having any relations—his impression that this world was on the eve of its destruction, and that the very ground he trod on was slipping away under his feet, returned to him more vivid than ever. The stately hush of the old halls and parks, which represented to him the climate in which his own thoughts had grown, and out of which he could hardly think at all, he seemed to see invaded by two discordant armies—a savage mad proletariat armed with

axes and firebrands, and an impertinent middle-class entrenching itself in villas, and devastating the aristocratic solitudes with sandwich-papers and the claws of lobsters. This impression was again traversed by another, that matters were not yet hopeless; and that though it was a riddle how to save what he clung to, the riddle had an answer, if he only knew where to find it. But both his hope and his despondency, and all the care included in them, were, for the time being, inseparable from the thought of Miss Consuelo Burton. *They* seemed like emanations from *it*; *it* seemed perpetually to be shaping itself out of *them*.

Such was his mood of mind when the stable-clock struck ten—the hour when the post was due: and before long a tray of letters was brought to him. He had only expected one which could bear on his anxiety. Instead of one there were three. There was the one he expected; he knew it must be her handwriting; he looked at the back, and there he saw her monogram. Besides that there was one from her eldest sister, and there was another from Mrs. Harley.

He read the one from the eldest sister first. She accepted Carew's explanation with regard to the presence of Freoman, but she did so in phrases of such studied coldness as to show that her displeasure remained, although the alleged pretext for it had been abandoned. This was apparent in even the first few sentences; and then followed something that was even more unequivocal. 'My sister has received the note which you thought fit to address to her on this subject, and with my sanction is herself writing to inform you that she is perfectly satisfied with your explanations. We must beg, therefore, that you will not put yourself to the trouble of either thinking or writing any more about it.'

He crushed the letter in his hand with a sense of anger and perplexity; and it was some time before he looked at the others. He resumed his walk at a more rapid pace, the very stamp of his feet betraying the mood that possessed him: and it was not till he had several times been the whole

length of the ramparts that he found himself prepared to open Miss Consuelo's envelope. Within its folds there was still some faint hope for him, but so faint that, like a flickering candle, it produced not light so much as an instant fear of darkness. At last, however, he tore it open and faced the contents. In a second his hope had vanished. Her few lines were as follows :—

‘DEAR MR. CAREW,—Your letter told me nothing that I had not already known. I was much interested in meeting Mr. Foreman ; but the incident, which you may have surmised would be very displeasing to my relations, was, so far as you are concerned, not only accidental but unavoidable : and I can assure you they are now quite aware of the fact. I am glad to have an opportunity of thanking you for my interesting visit ; and also of telling you that, everything being perfectly clear, no further explanations of any kind are necessary.

‘ I am, yours truly,
‘ C. BURTON.’

This letter he crushed even more violently than the other. He seemed for the moment to be on the point of tearing it up ; but changed his mind, and thrust it angrily into his pocket. Mrs. Harley's still remained for him ; he felt, however, that that might keep ; he had read quite enough for the present. He went indoors, put on a stout pair of walking-shoes, and, letting it be known that he would not be in till the evening, resolved to seek consolation in a long excursion on foot.

However heavily trouble may weigh upon one, there is a comfortless exhilaration in the effort to shake it off ; and Carew, when he emerged again, felt that his spirits rose a little. The charms of the day and country had also something to do with this. Colour and sunlight had naturally upon him much the same effect that music has upon some people ; and sore with a sense of undeserved injury, he

yielded himself now to their blandishments with a kind of defiant recklessness. The blinding blue of the sky, the liquid luxurious atmosphere which made the whole panorama glitter as if it were seen through water, the tints of the hills and hollows, the golden flash of the oranges, and the misty bloom of azure which slept on the distant mountains, and seemed as one looked to palpitate with its own intensity—all this struck on Carew's nerves like the crash of some inspiring orchestra. In a half-hearted way it made him feel a man again. Where he would go he had not yet decided ; but his eyes fell suddenly on a little mediæval town, shining over its olive-yards far off in the upland country. He had often heard reports of it—of its towers, its fortifications, and its singular antique houses. This was Saint Paul du Var. He resolved that he would go there now.

The walk was lovely. The country as he went revealed to him, by road or mule-path, its quaintest scenes and the choicest of its secret prospects ; and at last, after three hours' travel, on emerging from a grove of cork-trees, he saw on the opposite side of a deep but narrow gully a glimmering girdle of grey walls and bastions ; above these a huddling cluster of windows, roofs, and balconies, and crowning all, a church and a square watch-tower.

Continuing to follow the pathway which had brought him thus far, he arrived in the course of five or ten minutes more at a wooded slope, which shelved down to a carriage-road, or rather a space in which the carriage-road ended ; and on the farther side of this was the embattled gate of the town. Here he paused ; and seeing that the ground was inviting, he sat down on the dry brown pine-needles, and drew from his pocket some slight luncheon he had brought with him. Despite his unhappiness exercise had made him hungry ; and as he ate a reflective calm stole over him, such as often accompanies the satisfaction of any natural craving. He looked at the scene before him with a quiet, dejected interest. It was full of sympathetic suggestions. The narrow gateway that confronted him, flanked by two mouldering towers ;

the walls, pierced with loopholes, that ran to left and right of it, were still nearly as perfect as when their builders had left them. Little had changed them but the noiseless action of time, which had laid on them the tints of centuries. Close by these walls were several rude carts, plainly too wide to pass through the narrow arch. In and out amongst them were some little children playing ; an old crone with a distaff sat in the sunshine watching them ; and some twenty yards away a bevy of laughing girls were grouped together round a bubbling marble conduit, and with quick brown arms were washing their store of linen. Then presently there was a slight noise behind him. He turned to look, and straying downwards from the forest a boy goat-herd, actually playing on a pipe, passed by with his goats, like a figure out of a story-book.

Carew, as he sat contemplating this idyllic picture, instead of forgetting his own personal trouble, felt it by contrast assuming a clearer shape. For a second time in his life, Miss Consuelo Burton was lost to him ; but the circumstances now made the loss more crushing than formerly. Then she had left him against her will, and regretfully. Now she took part with those who told her to turn her back upon him. And why? For what reason? All the sins of his life rose up before him, as they are said to do before the eyes of a drowning man. At first he accused himself, and said, with a bitter humility, 'I am an unclean man. She is quite right in departing from me.' Then he compared—he could not help doing so—his own life with the lives of certain other men whom he knew the Miss Burtons treated with marked favour ; and in what way, he wondered, could he be worse than these? And why was he worse to-day than he had been a week before? Miss Consuelo was lost to him : that was one pain. But this, for the time being, was almost lost in another. He felt not as if he had been wounded, but as if he had been beaten all over ; and he was conscious of a sense of blank and wondering desolation, out of which affection had disappeared

like a trampled plant. All the present seemed somehow pitted against him. It was as hard and unjust to him, in the person of his private acquaintances, as it was alien to him in its general social tendencies ; and the past embodied in the objects now surrounding him, seemed to be receiving and soothing him like a tender personal friend.

He rose presently and entered the little town. He wandered eagerly through its narrow winding streets, noting with keen glance every detail of interest—the decayed scutcheon over a door that had once been noble ; the rich ironwork of some mediæval balcony ; or a well glimmering in the middle of some courtyard, its marble rim gashed with deep notches by the rope that had raised for centuries its ever luminous water. At last a crooked alley brought him out upon the ramparts, and, having looked about him for a few minutes, he sat down on an old rusty cannon, which had probably lain where it was unmoved since the days of Vauban. Everything his eye fell on harmonised with his own spirit. The old masonry, the fortifications, the immemorial houses, in their forlorn survival, and in their utter absence of hope, seemed, as it were, to be a part of his own being.

In this mood of mind he bethought himself of Mrs. Harley's letter. He could learn nothing from it that would add to his unhappiness ; it might contain something that would at least ease his anxiety. It began, as might have been expected, with a number of civil things about the charms of Courbon-Loubet, and the unpleasantness of Miss Consuelo's departure. It then went on to repeat the assurances which Carey had received already from two other quarters, and which added to his uneasiness rather than took away from it—that the Burtons, so far as Foreman's presence was concerned, now realised fully that they had no complaint against him. The letter went on as follows :—

‘ You know, however, what Elfrida is ; and, somehow or other, there has been some mischief made about you. What it exactly means I really can't make out ; but I think I have

gathered one thing—that that insufferable Mr. Inigo is at the bottom of it. Perhaps that may tell you something. It doesn't tell me much ; and Elfrida is as close as her own father confessor, and when she is opinionated there is no one so perverse as she is. I should like to shake her. However, these little matters, though they are very annoying at the time, soon blow over and clear themselves up, if one only lets them alone. Indeed, my dear Mr. Carew, if I had nothing to tell you but this it would hardly have been worth while for me to inflict a letter on you. But I have more to tell you.

‘ Here, then, is some news which you may not yet have seen in the papers : indeed parts of it have only just reached me by a private telegram. Here is some news which will at once amuse and please you. Eighteen out of twenty of our friend Foreman's elections have come off already. Eighteen of his Socialist candidates, who were to rally round them, in all its terrible strength, the voting force of educated and of organised labour—Foreman thought that the result would make all England tremble, probably all Europe—well, of these eighteen gentlemen, the one who polled most votes polled—how many should you think ? Out of eight thousand votes, and in a constituency supposed to be the most revolutionary in the kingdom, this terrible candidate polled a hundred and ninety-five ; and none of the other eighteen polled as many as thirty. Poor Foreman ! It's impossible not to pity him ; and yet, though I like him, it's impossible not to be amused at him. You never saw a man so completely knocked down in your life. I dare say in a week or two he'll be full of explanations, but he hasn't had time to think of *one* yet. He's positively as white as a sheet, except when I make fun of him, and then he gets red with anger—or rather he did, for, I believe to avoid me, he has gone off to spend a week in retreat at Mentone ; and from thence, he told me, he is going back straight to London. There was something almost ghastly in the eyes of the poor creature when he warned me at parting that we should soon hear again

of him, and that his members without constituencies—I don't know how they'll manage—will soon hold a parliament that will make us all tremble, in the streets. Meanwhile, I think you and I may congratulate ourselves that the old order of things has still got legs to stand upon—even, perhaps, the old families with their quarterings. Only, you and your friends must show them how to be useful ; and—a thing which is even more important—you must get them to be so after you have shown them.

‘The Burtons leave Nice to-morrow for Rome, where they remain till Easter, and where we expect to join them, and then we talk of going home together by the Italian lakes. I wish there was any chance of your being at your cousin's beautiful island villa at that time, and that we might all meet again. I have not the least doubt that between this and then Elfrida will have unbosomed her secret to me ; and I shall be able to show her what a ridiculous mare's-nest it has been. Yes—depend upon it: like a good soul as she is, in another three weeks she will be humbly begging your pardon, and you will be generously dissembling your sense that she looks foolish.’

The first part of the letter told Carew little. The mention, indeed, of Mr. Inigo's name produced a passing emotion of contemptuous and irritated wonder ; but what Mrs. Harley said with regard to the Burtons merely deepened his blank and almost dreamlike sense of estrangement from them. The elder sisters, he felt, might believe or disbelieve what they pleased ; but nothing could soften his memory of the way in which the younger one had parted from him. Very different was the effect of the political news that had reached him. The vast forces of change which were supposed to be undermining society, and which seemed to menace with their widespread and subterranean rumblings the imminent ruin of all the existing fabric—these forces had put their strength to the test : and with what result ? The terrible Titan, so it seemed to Carew, had shrunk to the proportions of a squalid malignant dwarf. He felt like a man relieved suddenly from

a nightmare. He was not in a mood to criticise this impression. It came to him by surprise ; he received it glowing with gratitude ; and a sense of exhilaration spread itself through all his body, as if after a long fast he had drunk some strong stimulant.

He rose from his seat. The Château de Coubon-Loubet seemed to rear itself on its hill with a bolder and statelier dignity. The old buildings round him partook of the same spirit. They ceased to look forlorn ; they defied change and progress. He resumed his walk with a light and excited step, resolving to see, if possible, the interiors of some of the houses. Full of these thoughts, he was descending a flight of steps which led down from the ramparts to the level of the ground below, when his foot slipped and he found that he had sprained his ankle. The immediate pain was not great, but he feared that it would soon increase, and he was at once confronted with a doubt as to how he should get home.

The scene of the accident was close to the gateway of the town, and, recollecting the carts he had noticed outside, he made his way to them limping, in order to see if he could not engage one as a vehicle. He had hardly, however, emerged from the shadow of the arch, when the first sight that presented itself was a carriage, which must have arrived lately. The horses had been taken out, but the coachman was in his place on the box, and was placidly regaling himself with the contents of some paper packages. Carew's ankle at the moment beginning to be more painful, his ordinary scruples at once went to the winds ; and he inquired with interest of the coachman from what place he had come, and of what his party consisted. The carriage had come from Cannes ; its occupants were three people, and they were now inspecting the town. Carew, on hearing this, explained his condition to the coachman ; told him he was anxious to get to the Château de Courbon-Loubet, which lay hardly more than a mile off the direct Cannes road ; and then, with the present of a five-franc piece,

begged him to look for his employers, and ask them if, of their goodness, they would give a lift to a gentleman who had just lamed himself.

But he had hardly finished speaking when the coachman, with a jerk of his thumb, exclaimed, 'Voilà, monsieur !' and Carew, turning his head, saw coming towards him the very people in question. There was a tall bronzed man with a somewhat military bearing, walking slowly by the side of a middle-aged lady—a lady whose face was singularly gentle in expression, and who was a little singular, too, for the richness of her Parisian dress. There was something in her look and movements so attractive and soothing, that Carew had hardly time to do more than notice that a second lady of some sort was walking a short way behind them, under the shade of a fanciful brown parasol : and he was just preparing, though not without some shyness, to advance and meet the two foremost of the strangers, when their companion, moving her parasol, caught sight of him and started. He started also. They both had a second look at each other ; and Carew recognised in the strangers Miss Capel and her parents.

The girl's smile had still the same charm for him, the same frankness, the same tantalising mystery, that it had had on the mountain road and in the moonlit garden at Nice. With a quick elastic step she came forward to meet him ; and a welcome in her eyes flashed like sunshine on trembling water. He, too, moved forward a step or two. There was something intoxicating in the pleasure she showed at seeing him ; and he hardly knew whether his ankle pained him or no.

'Mamma,' she said, 'this is Mr. Carew, who saved my precious fan for me—the beautiful one you gave me. Mr. Carew, this is General Capel.'

'You seem,' said Mrs. Capel, 'to have much the same tastes as we have. We are devoted to wanderings amongst these old places.'

'But, God bless my soul !' exclaimed the General.

‘Have you hurt yourself? You seem as if you could hardly walk.’

Carew explained that such was indeed the case, and that when they appeared he was just nerving himself to ask if they would take him home in their carriage.

‘I discovered,’ he said, ‘from your coachman, that you had come from Cannes—I see you have left Nice—and my house lies almost directly upon the way.’

‘And how have you come?’ inquired Mrs. Capel kindly. ‘Have you walked?’

Carew explained that he had, and also where he was living.

‘I remember,’ the girl exclaimed. ‘you told me you had a castle somewhere. Fancy a castle in these days! You are like a prince out of a fairy tale.’

‘Mr. Carew,’ interposed Mrs. Capel, ‘I am forgetting myself. We are letting you stand when you ought to be sitting down. Come, get into the carriage, and make yourself comfortable! The back seat—I insist. I’m accustomed to be obeyed in these things. That’s right, and like a sensible person. And now, if you’ll take my advice, rest your foot on the seat opposite.’

Mrs. Capel’s voice was unusually soft and musical, and there was a trace in her of that simple and yet most dangerous charm which, Carew was already aware, was one of her daughter’s attributes. The childlike, the unconscious, the fearless frankness of manner, though never more familiar than that of a well-bred friend, was wholly without the ceremonious distance found and expected in an ordinary well-bred acquaintance: and the impression produced on Carew, both by mother and daughter, was peculiar. It was not as if they had pushed themselves with any effort into his confidence; but as if without effort, like two witches or fairies, they had traversed the space by which mundane strangers are separated, and put themselves noiselessly close to him by a mere act of sympathy.

Mrs. Capel’s commands as a nurse he found there was

no resisting. He arranged himself exactly in the attitude she suggested ; and then the daughter, with a smile of mimic authority, got into the carriage and propped his back up with a cushion.

CHAPTER II.

A SIREN.

DURING the earlier part of the drive, so far as Miss Capel was concerned, it was enough for Carew to be pleasantly conscious that she was there. Her pretty jacket, her black hat trimmed with honeysuckle, her light brown gloves, and her pocket-handkerchief edged with forget-me-nots, all combined to make up a piquant picture, which took a meaning from the sense that her eyes were watching him. But his whole conversation he gave to the two elders, anxious to arrive at some sort of conclusion as to who and whence they were, and what was their position and history.

He gradually learnt quite enough to transform them from social phantoms into flesh-and-blood social realities. The General, who spoke with a slightly un-English accent, was descended not remotely from a well-known English family ; his parents, however, had settled in the Southern States of America, and his military rank was that of an officer in the Confederate army. As to Mrs. Capel he could not glean quite so much, but he gathered from something said that she too was a Southerner by birth, though the greater part of her life had been passed in Paris and London. In addition to this, though there was no trace in her manner of any desire to boast of any great acquaintances, she betrayed quite accidentally that she had one or two intimate friends, amongst not only men but women, of the highest position and character. It is true that there breathed about her a certain perfume of Bohemia, but it was a Bohemian perfume of the highest and most delicate kind.

By-and-by, having talked with the parents enough to establish for them and himself some mutual social footing,

he began to address himself more particularly to the daughter ; nor was he long in discovering at least one new charm in her. This was her keen sense of the beauty of the scenes around her. She not only saw but felt it ; and in the little remarks which she made from time to time on the changing effects of shadow and light and colour, still more in the pensive silence in which she would sometimes watch them, he felt, as it were, that he was listening to a musical instrument, from which the outer world was eliciting some tender, delightful melody. In the radiant morning, as he started for his walk, nature had appealed to him directly ; now it appealed to him through the appeal it made to a woman, and came fraught with the music and mystery of a woman's heart. The imaginative impression that he was listening to some actual tune grew on him with a dreamy enchantment ; but its meaning, as he listened to it, became more and more ambiguous. Now it was a woman's longing for a love that had not yet come to her ; now it was a woman's regret for some dead love or lover ; now it was the sound of a child singing one of Blake's 'Songs of Innocence.'

Meanwhile the afternoon was waning : the sunlight first grew rich with a warm gold colour ; then into this came a stealthy flush of rosiness ; and by-and-by the west was barred with crimson ; and the purple dusk of the twilight descended from the stainless sky.

Miss Capel looked round her as the silent darkness deepened ; and, after a long pause, murmured almost in a whisper, 'The shadows seem to fall on everything, just as the dew does.' There was a spell as she spoke, not in the words so much as in the tone. The tone seemed to say, as distinctly as any language could, that it came from a heart which would not be so touched now if it were not tender for very different causes, or at least if it would not be.

'Look,' said Carew, as a turn of the road brought into view a new reach of country, 'there is the château at the top of the further hill.'

‘Indeed!’ said the General. ‘It must be a very interesting place. I was wondering what it was as we came along this morning.’

‘And I hope,’ said Mrs. Capel, ‘as soon as you get there, Mr. Carew, you will be careful of that ankle of yours. Will you let us send over a doctor from Cannes to you? We are quite early : you needn’t look at your watch.’

‘I was looking at my watch,’ said Carew, ‘not with any thought of the doctor, but because I wanted to ask you if you would remain and dine with me?’

‘I am afraid,’ said Mrs. Capel, ‘that it’s too late for that.’

‘No,’ retorted Carew, laughing ; ‘I’m not going to let you off. It’s too late for one thing—for you to make that excuse. Let us ask the General.’ The General politely hesitated. ‘And you, Miss Capel,’ Carew went on, ‘what do you say? Would you like the arrangement?’ Miss Capel said nothing, but with a soft, almost solemn smile, raised her eyes to his and nodded her head slowly. They at once moved in a world of secret mutual understanding.

‘Come,’ Carew resumed, ‘let us consider that that is settled. Your horses will be all the better for resting ; and you, Mrs. Capel, who have been so kind to me as an invalid, must know that for a sufferer there is nothing like pleasant company.’

These persuasions were, before long, successful ; and it was quite evident that the Capels were pleased to have been persuaded. Little had Carew expected when he set forth in the morning, desolate and depressed about everything—about life and love and politics—little had he expected that he should return a few hours later with an excitement that disguised if it did not cure his unhappiness. And yet such was, indeed, the case. Only for one moment, as they crossed, in nearing the château, the track of his Sunday walk with Miss Consuelo Burton, did a sickening pain, a despairing regret come back to him. But it passed presently ; the remarks of his new friends drowned it ; and

in the pleasure and expectation they betrayed as the five-sided tower drew nearer, he felt a renewal of his own fresh sensations on perceiving it first himself. Indeed, when they arrived at the great arched entrance, and he conducted his guests across the court into the interior, he was conscious of an excitement, in receiving these chance strangers, which last week had been altogether wanting when he was performing the same office to his friends. To his friends the *château* had appealed as a fragment of history—as part of a past to which they had some close relation. To his present guests it was a fragment, not of history but of fairyland. It was a delightful adventure to them to find themselves in the midst of it; and to him by sympathy it became an adventure also. Everything suddenly acquired the charm of strangeness. The table, covered with its familiar glass and silver, and the faded liveries of the lackeys dimly moving in the background—he could hardly believe that he had ever seen any of it before.

‘I wish,’ he said as dinner drew to an end, ‘that I could take you for a walk on the terrace and through the gardens in the moonlight.’

‘No, no,’ said Mrs. Capel, ‘you keep yourself quiet. There was an arm-chair in the room where we were just now, which I at once took note of as the very thing for an invalid. Perhaps the General and Violet might go out and look about them for a moment; and meanwhile, I will give you a little medical advice.’

Carew was not pleased exactly at the notion of being parted from Miss Capel; but Mrs. Capel, by some mysterious exercise of authority, contrived, when they rose from the table and passed into the adjoining salon, that her husband and daughter should do as she had suggested; and she herself and Carew were presently left together. He soon comprehended the reason of this gentle and adroit manœuvre.

With a kind imperiousness she saw him arranged in

comfort ; and then, with a grave expression, taking a seat close to him, 'I had heard from my daughter,' she said, 'how you had met her at Madame de Saint Valery's—Madame de Saint Valery is, as you know, my niece. What a sad story hers is !'

'It is,' said Carew. 'No one knows that better than I do. There was never a woman who had more good in her——'

'Yes, yes,' said Mrs. Capel, interrupting him, 'and never a woman who has come to greater evil. Mr. Carew,' she continued, 'you have never before heard of me ; but though I never expected to see you, I have heard a good deal of you. I know how on the night before she finally threw over everything, you took her for a walk by the side of the river at Hurlingham, and made her tell you the trouble that you saw was on her mind. I know how she told you plainly the desperate resolve she had taken, and how you did all you could to dissuade her. Her husband was in St. Petersburg. He had never behaved well to her. In all London she had no real friend but you ; and you, though people said you were yourself in love with her, did all you could, like a real friend, to save her. Mr. Carew, I know it was from no selfish motive. You were no rival of the man who did the mischief. You wonder how I know. My unhappy niece has told me.'

'If ever I,' said Carew, 'had any influence for good on her, it was only because in herself there was so much goodness naturally.'

'There was,' said Mrs. Capel ; 'and it was for this reason that I allowed Violet the other night to go to her. But—I hoped for an opportunity of speaking to you on this subject—*that* can never occur again. I suppose you are hardly aware what has happened to that poor creature by this time. She is now with some Russian prince—a real prince, but a ruined man and a thorough-paced scoundrel. She is with this man,' said Mrs. Capel, drawing closer to Carew, and lowering her voice, though there was no one at

hand to overhear her, 'and she helps him in keeping a private gambling-hell at Nice. The whole thing is done with the utmost secrecy. Their great effort is to elude the vigilance of the police. It seems there is a club of them, and they meet in different houses—never at the same house two nights running. Can you fancy anything more dreadful? Any morning we may see in the papers that she has been arrested. This is the reason why we have left Nice. It is a sad story, but I wished to tell it you ; partly because you had taken an interest in her, and partly because I wished to explain to you how my child came to be with her. That was a circumstance which otherwise you might have easily misunderstood.'

'No,' said Carew, 'I think not. At all events, I understand it perfectly now. Poor Madame de Saint Valery ; fancy her having come to that !'

'Isn't it extraordinary?' said Mrs. Capel. 'And it's not for the sake of money that she has formed her present connection. She has money of her own—plenty of it. She has just bought a villa in Italy. No—it's simply an impulse, a caprice for this man ; but a caprice, while it lasts, as generous as the best kind of affection. Yes, Mr. Carew, hers is a fine nature ruined.'

Whilst she was speaking servants appeared with coffee.

'And now,' she went on, 'let us send for them to come in from the terrace. Perhaps also you will allow me to order the carriage.'

'Not yet,' said Carew ; 'you can wait half an hour longer. Think when you are gone how lonely and desolate I shall feel.'

'Mr. Carew,' said Miss Capel, appearing at the window, 'this is the most beautiful place, I think, I ever saw in my life. Can we ever thank you enough for having let us see it?'

'Yes, you can,' said Carew ; and then turning to Mrs. Capel, 'You can thank me easily,' he added, 'in one way ; and in one way only. Come here again, and pay me a visit

for a day or two. I am quite alone here ; and, as you know, I am partly crippled. But I could at least show you some of the neighbourhood, which is beautiful ; and if you were not afraid of finding this place dull, you would certainly prevent its being exceedingly dull to me.'

There was a little pause, and Mrs. Capel looked at her husband. 'I am afraid,' said Carew, 'that the General would not find much to amuse him.'

'Oh, it's not that !' said Mrs. Capel. 'The General at the present moment likes quiet better than anything. He's writing an account of the Battle of Bull Run for one of the New York magazines. To us, I am sure, nothing could be more delightful.'

'Then in that case,' said Carew, 'we will consider the matter settled. It only remains for us to fix the day.'

'I'm afraid,' said the General, 'it can't be till the week after next. Next week we are obliged to go to Genoa.'

'Then why not this week ?' said Carew. 'Have you any engagements this week ?' It appeared that they had not. Carew's heart beat with pleasure. 'Well, then,' he said, 'suppose that you come to-morrow. To-morrow is Thursday. That would give you a few days here, at any rate.'

Again there was some hesitation, and a little family council ; but the result was quickly arrived at, and after one or two rapid arguments, the invitation was accepted with the prettiest grace in the world.

CHAPTER III.

THE GATES OF DREAMLAND.

THE Capels, when they went—when their carriage disappeared into the darkness, seemed to Carew to have come and gone like a vision, and all his cares crowded back again on him. The vacant rooms were filled again with his friends ; he heard the voices that echoed his own feelings ;

the chairs, the walls, all the objects around him, told him that the eyes of Miss Consuelo Burton had rested on them: and he asked himself in a fit of weary and useless repentance why he had invited these strangers to profane and trouble his solitude. He remained in this mood during most of the next day, and had hardly tried to get free of it before his visitors came. When he thought of the girl who had so readily charmed him yesterday, another image like a ghost revealed itself by the side of hers, and hers became almost an annoyance, which disturbed without distracting him.

Luckily, however, for the credit of his own civility, the Capels' actual arrival roused a little of his yesterday's interest in them, and, helped by a crutch, he limped out to welcome them. There they were with a *cortège* of two carriages, one containing themselves, the other their boxes and servants. The moment he saw them again he felt his pulse quicken, and a number of minute impressions were stamped upon his memory in a moment—the spiked moustache and brown hands of the General, the dove-like glance and the delicately faded face of the mother, and the dainty audacity, almost too much like that of a fashion-book, which caught his eye in Miss Capel's dress as she descended.

Then followed presently the same little round of incidents which had marked the arrival of the Harleys and Miss Consuelo Burton. There was the same gathering in another ten minutes round the tea-table; there was the very same tea-service. But the room, and everything in it, though nothing whatever had been changed, was like the same instrument having a new tune played on it, and it seemed to be filled with a wholly different atmosphere.

Mrs. Capel's eye at once lit on the cups; and drawing off a long grey glove, which she extracted with difficulty from under a heavy bracelet, she took one of them up and examined it with the air of a connoisseur. 'Do you know,' she exclaimed, 'that these are perfectly priceless?' And she informed Carew of their exact date and history.

after she was attracted by the old silver tea-pot, and she seemed equally able to give an opinion about that.

‘This old place,’ she said, looking round her with a smile of soft surprise, ‘must be a regular museum if all of it is like this room. Do you see, Violet, those fiddles and flutes over the door there? They are exactly like what the Count has at St. Cloud in his billiard-room. You must know, Mr. Carew, that I am devoted to china and *bric-à-brac*. We have a house at Saint Cloud ourselves; and our neighbour, whom I was just speaking of, is one of the greatest collectors in Paris. Are you,’ she added, again looking at the tea-cups—‘are you very fond of these beautiful things yourself?’

‘I like them here,’ said Carew, ‘because they are in keeping with the place.’

Mrs. Capel, however, hardly heard this, for looking up, she exclaimed with enthusiasm, ‘What a pity it is that they should be all thrown away here! For your cousin, I think you told me, never comes here himself; and your presence is nothing more than an accident. However, as it’s not your house, I am going to indulge my feelings, and admire, and admire, and admire everything to my heart’s content. Rudolph,’ she went on to her husband, ‘look at these lovely curtains. They’re exactly like that brocade on the walls of Violet’s sitting-room.’

Carew felt suddenly that he began to understand something as to where the difference lay between his new friends and himself. The contents of the château pleased and satisfied him because to him they were the right things in the right place; they delighted, but they surprised, Mrs. Capel because they were the right things in a strange place. At once his mind constructed from her manner, from her tone, from her temperament, the external surroundings of herself, her husband, and her daughter. He had a vision of a villa, dainty as a jewel-casket, with gaily painted ceilings and cabinets of Sèvres china; where everything had about it a bloom of newness, delicate as the youth in the bloom of

a girl's complexion, and where the antiquity of the choicest artistic objects only gave them the charm of the rarest and the newest acquisitions. The difference was just this. To Carew, such objects in a drawing-room would suggest a dilapidated château; to Mrs. Capel, such objects in a château suggested a possible drawing-room.

The General, as he talked to him, bore out this impression. It was quite evident that he was a man of taste and cultivation; and he instantly named the painters of two small Dutch pictures which Carew, till that moment, had never looked at twice. He seemed well acquainted, too, with the history of the Revolution in France, and the position of the *noblesse* both before and after it. But the subject, though it commanded his interest, made no appeal to his sympathy. He treated it as calmly as if it were some geologic catastrophe: whilst as to the old towns, which he seemed so fond of visiting, it is true that he admired them for their picturesqueness and their curiosity; but in their associations he found nothing more personally touching to him than he would have probably found in some curious geologic formation.

Nor did Miss Capel in this way differ much from her parents, except that to her the strangeness and antiquity of the château seemed a source of imaginative and half-smiling alarm, which Carew, as he watched her, presently found himself admitting became her almost as well as a feeling for its real meaning and history. And this impression grew on him. All the signs about him of a stately order of things which was well-nigh dead in France, and might soon be dying in England, possessed for himself so close and sad a significance, that was, to his ears, a kind of fairy-like music in hearing them spoken of by a pair of lips so dainty merely as 'so odd' and 'so curious,' as if no sadness attached to them. He even smiled with pleasure as he caught in her soft eyes a floating flash of what seemed like unwilling amusement.

'I must,' she said, rising as soon as she had finished her

tea, 'move about and examine everything for myself. Mr. Carew, you don't mind it—do you? I'll promise to be careful, and break absolutely nothing. Ah,' she exclaimed presently, 'what flowers! what roses! Mr. Carew, I like them best of all!'

Carew watched her as she stood close to the window, with her nostrils buried in a forest of crimson petals. She seemed like a creature fed on the breath of gardens. Then, turning round, with deliberate gliding waywardness, she moved here and there, inspecting one thing after another, till at last, in the corner, she caught sight of an old harpsichord. 'Will it play?' she asked, with a little cry of delight.

'Try,' said Carew. 'Let me open it for you.'

The instrument was certainly not in very good condition; but still Miss Capel contrived to elicit an air from it, that was not only distinctly an air, but an air full of plaintive pathos. Carew was much struck by this quick transition of sentiment, for her face as she looked at him seemed to take its expression from the music; and with some interest he asked what the air was. She did not stop playing, but, fixing her eyes on him with a half-regretful mockery, 'Don't you know it?' she said. 'It is quite old, I believe.

Si le Roi m'avoit donné
Paris, sa grande ville—

The words come from Molière. Didn't he live under the Monarchy—under the old *régime*? I thought you were a Legitimist—isn't that what you call it?—and that you cared for all that sort of thing. I wanted to prove to you that I was not quite ignorant—not quite unworthy of being a visitor at your château.'

Carew murmured that she had proved that long ago. She had stopped playing now, though her hands were still on the keys, and, bending a little forward and looking at him very gravely, 'Would you like me,' she said, 'to prove it to you still more conclusively?'

‘You have proved it enough,’ said Carew ; ‘but you can never prove it too often. Yes, please, prove it me in the way you say you will.’

‘I don’t know,’ she said—‘I don’t know if I have the courage. I can’t do it just at this moment at all events. I shall have to consult mamma.’

What she could mean he was utterly at a loss to conjecture ; and she seemed to please herself in watching his baffled curiosity, which was only interrupted by the distant clang of the dressing-bell.

He had by this time recovered completely his yesterday’s sense of her fascination. He now was convinced that she would distract without disturbing him, and he looked forward with interest to seeing her dressed for dinner. Her parents, however, both came down without her ; and Mrs. Capel with many apologies said she would be ready directly. But the minutes went by : no Miss Capel appeared ; and her mother at last insisted that dinner be kept waiting no longer for her. They had not, however, finished their soup when the defaulter entered ; and Carew could hardly repress an exclamation of delight and of astonishment. Anything so radiant, so bewildering, he had never seen in his life. She was powdered and patched, and her cheeks had a natural flush on them that was not rouge, and that made rouge unnecessary. Her dress was perfect, from the ribbon round her neck to the tips of her high-heeled shoes. She was a beauty of the Court of Louis Quinze come to life again ; and the way in which she bore herself made the spell complete. There was a little shyness in her entrance, but no awkwardness. There was an expression in her eyes, in her movements even, half mischievous and half deprecating ; and she advanced to the table with all the grace of a child conscious of some misdemeanor and yet certain not to be punished for it.

‘It’s a dress,’ said her mother, ‘which she wore at a fancy ball at Paris. It is just like a picture in the gallery outside ; Violet noticed it the moment we came into the

house, and nothing would satisfy her but to surprise you in it to-night.'

'I hope,' said Miss Capel, looking at Carew as she sat down—'I hope you are not angry with me. I wanted to show you, as I told you at the piano, that I could make myself, at least superficially—is that the right word, I wonder?—I dare say it isn't—that I could make myself superficially in keeping with an historic château.'

'Why,' said Carew by-and-by, 'can't we all go back to powder, and dress as they did a hundred years ago?'

'We should have to change plenty of other things,' laughed the General, 'before we could manage that.'

'We should,' said Carew, 'and I should like plenty of other things changed.'

'How funny that would be!' said Miss Capel, smiling at the idea. 'No—I don't want, myself, to go back to powder for always. It takes so long to do; you've no notion of what a time it takes. I don't think, indeed, that I want to go back at all, except—except——'

'Except what?' said Carew, in a low tone of inquiry.

The General and his wife were at that moment speaking to each other, and Miss Capel, having cast a glance towards them, let her eyes rest on Carew's, and finished her broken sentence.

'We should all of us like, I suppose, to go back in our own lives for some things—to do them again, or not to do them at all.'

These words, and the manner in which she uttered them, remained in Carew's mind all through the course of dinner; and no sooner did the party find themselves in the drawing-room than, pointing out to her a magnificent grand piano, 'I hope,' he said, 'you will go back far enough now, to play us that old song again. Perhaps, too, you would sing it to us?'

'I'm afraid,' she said, 'I have quite forgotten the words; but if you like, I will certainly sing you something—that is to say, if you don't make me feel too shy. What shall I sing?'

she went on as Carew was opening the piano for her. 'Mamma, tell me what I shall sing.' And whilst she was speaking her fingers began touching the keys. Mrs. Capel was about to suggest a song, but before she could name it the musician had already begun one. It was quite different from anything Carew had expected, but in a second or two his senses confessed its witchery. It was in some Italian dialect, and moved to a tinkling air, as light and tender as the murmur of waves in moonlight. 'It is a little love-song,' she said, 'that is sung by Neapolitan fishermen. Do you like it? Here is another.' The other was of a different character, though apparently in the same dialect. To Carew the words meant nothing; but he could not mistake the sentiment, its plaintive melancholy, its mixture of rest and wistfulness; and the eyes of the singer, with a look of devotional abstraction in them, seemed to form unconsciously a part of the song themselves. But the object of the sentiment—as to that he was in doubt.

'What,' she said softly, when she had ended, 'do you think of that? Do you like it as well? It is an evening hymn the boatmen sing to the Virgin. It's the favourite song of my cousin, Madame de Saint Valery.'

'Tell me this,' he said by-and-by to her, as they were all preparing to retire. 'That hymn I like best of all your songs. Are you Catholics?'

'No, no,' she said, 'I don't know what we are. I don't suppose the General and mamma are anything. Can't one sing songs like that, and yet not be a Catholic?'

'But you,' he said, 'sang it with feeling. At least I thought so.'

'Do you ever,' she replied, 'read any of Shelley's poetry? If you do perhaps you have read these lines—

The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow;
A devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow—

That is what, somehow, that song seems to mean to me.'

CHAPTER IV.

'MY HAND IS ON THY BROW.'

By the following morning Carew was pretty clear in his mind as to where the charm lay that his new friends possessed for him ; and he thought it over with a distinct if not a deep satisfaction, though the eyes of Miss Consuelo Burton were still watching him in the background. Their charm lay in the fact that whilst they sympathised with him on some points there were others, a whole set of them, in which they not only did not sympathise with him, but which it seemed they could not even comprehend. There was a total want in them of those social prejudices and attachments, and—it appeared—of those religious perplexities also, which were making all life in these latter days seem dark to him. They had no capital entrusted to those two disastrous vessels—a foundering aristocracy, and a religion that was already a derelict. The past to them was nothing more than a curiosity ; the changes of the present perplexed them with no personal problems : and Carew felt that in their company he caught their insensibility to his own sources of sorrow. He became conscious as he was dressing of a singular sense of emancipation. The sky of his mind grew suddenly blue and cloudless, and a world was breathing round him languid or bright with flowers. So vivid, indeed, was this last impression, that, with a fanciful wish to act literally in accordance with it, he had the actual flowers of the garden picked in increased profusion, in order to fill the rooms with scent and brilliant colour ; and the Capels had not been with him for four-and-twenty hours before a new spirit seemed to animate all the château.

His present disabled condition, though it proved to be nothing serious, prevented his making as yet any active efforts to entertain them ; but, strange to say, no such efforts were needed. With the aid of his crutch he could move from room to room, and he was thus able to exhibit the contents

of the house to them. Then the General had his own literary work to engage him; and whenever his attention was not claimed elsewhere, he was perfectly happy in a little study that had been allotted to him. Both the ladies, too, with a tact that was half-thoughtfulness and half-instinct, did as their host begged them, and made themselves equally at home. Mrs. Capel brought down a gorgeous piece of embroidery, which she was copying from a Sicilian pattern; and, seated near a window in an old gilt arm-chair, she was a perfect picture of contented and luxurious industry. As for Miss Capel, her ways, from Carew's point of view, though a little more restless, were not less satisfactory. She brought down a portfolio of music, which she turned over and discussed with him. Then again returning to her little hoard in her bedroom, she produced a pile of her favourite books of poetry; and at last, having admitted that she drew, she was prevailed on to exhibit her sketches. Carew was surprised at the talent displayed in these—especially in some coloured portraits. 'If,' he said, 'you like to paint whilst you are here, there is an easel in one of the rooms, and a canvas stretched in readiness. The room itself would make a capital studio. You have just shown me your poets: it is there that I keep mine. Come and see it—will you?'

They went, and he found himself for the first time really alone with her. He was surprised at the pleasure the situation gave him. The room in question—the first of that suite of three which he had shown to his former guests as the scenes of his private labours, was hung with English chintz, and had old-fashioned English furniture. A century back it had been occupied by one of his great-great-aunts. Miss Capel was delighted with it; but a farther door being open, she glided forward and peeped into the room adjoining. 'More books!' she exclaimed, and she began to read the titles of them. These were Carew's treatises on philosophy and theology. She did not proceed far. With an odd incredulous smile she turned towards him and said, 'Do you really ever look into these? How funny of you!

I can't imagine it.' Then with a little grimace of mock determination and wilfulness, 'Now,' she said, 'I am going to open this other door. This is your Bluebeard's room, perhaps, where you keep your beheaded wives.' She opened the door, but closed it almost instantly. 'Oh,' she said, 'that's nothing! That's just like a lawyer's office. I suppose it's the place where you add all your accounts up. No, no—here is the room I like,' and she went back again to the one they had first entered. 'Do you know,' she exclaimed, 'this looks exactly like a home—not, I mean, a home that I have ever had myself; but like what I imagine an English home must be. Oh! and, Mr. Carew, you have got my dear Shelley here!'

'You shall make this your home,' said Carew, 'as long as you stay with me. It shall be your own room.'

'Do you think,' she replied, 'one can make a home in three days?'

'Three days!' he said. 'You must stay longer than that. Now I have you here I am not going to let you go. See, there is the easel, in case you should care to use it.'

She gave a slight start, as if a new thought had occurred to her. Then she looked at him for a few moments in silence, with all the while an ambushed laugh in her eyes. At last she said:—

'If you will sit to me, I will try and make a picture of you. Not now—I don't mean that—but to-morrow. You mustn't mind, though, if it's a very bad one—all out of drawing—one shoulder higher than the other. I'm not able to flatter.'

'You mean not with your pencil?'

'I don't think,' she said gravely, still keeping her eyes on him, 'that I could flatter *you* in any way. How could I? What could you care for anything I said to you?'

She stopped short abruptly, and her gaze wandered away from him, something as that of a kitten does when its eye is caught by a butterfly. 'Oh!' she said, 'how delicious! Is

not that a guitar in the corner? I used to play the guitar. Let me take it to mamma and show it to her.'

'Presently,' said Carew.

'No,' she said, smiling, 'not presently, but now—instantly, Mr. Carew—instantly.'

He could hardly believe his senses. She moved quietly up to him and gently touched his arm to emphasise her wish that he should be moving. But what struck him far more than the familiarity of the action was the total want in it of any suggestion of boldness. It suggested nothing but an almost unconscious trust, and the moment the first shock of surprise was over he felt as he would have felt had he been touched by some soft wild animal. He was sorry that the *tête-à-tête* should be ended; but there was a sort of pleasure even in obeying her command to end it.

Chemists tell us that at a touch a liquid will sometimes crystallise. A touch will produce sometimes as great a change in feelings. Everything the girl did, however slight and trivial—her words, her smiles, her gestures, the smallest occupation she shared with him, even her playing Beggar-my-neighbour, as she did with him that evening—all became full of some magical and indefinable charm. She was not only freeing his spirit from its natural load of cares, but she was gradually lulling and refreshing it with some undreamt-of melody. What the melody meant he was in no hurry to ask himself. In its uncertainty lay some part of its spell. He only knew, when, on this second night of her visit, he looked back on the day which had just been ended, that although on the surface there were none but the most trivial incidents, yet its memory was to him a mosaic of coloured moments.

CHAPTER V.

THE SIREN'S PRELUDE.

THE day which followed was superficially just as tranquil; but under the surface he found it even more bewildering.

It was iridescent with new sensations. The General talked pleasantly at meals, and talked pleasantly over his cigarette afterwards. In the intervals of sociability he retired to his notes and papers ; his wife sat in the gilt arm-chair at her embroidery, diffusing around her an atmosphere of suave and refined contentment ; once or twice there was a little music ; coffee was drunk on the ramparts in the bright afternoon sunshine ; in the evening the guitar was strung and played upon ; and finally there was a rubber of whist. Meanwhile, during the course of the morning, Carew's portrait had been begun, in the chintz-hung studio.

So far as events went, this was the whole day's chronicle ; and if the conversation which went with them had come to be written down, it would, for the most part, have seemed equally insignificant. This was the case with what passed in private between the sitter and the artist, just as much as with what passed when they were altogether. Indeed, to Carew one of Miss Capel's chief attractions was, that with her conversation came so naturally that it left behind it no lasting trace in his memory—nothing but a wake of laughing and disappearing ripples. It was less an intentional interchange of thoughts than a natural result of the contact of two lives. It was little more conscious than the sound of meeting waters, or than the blush that comes on the cheek of health or pleasure.

But though its details, for the most part, made but little impression upon him, yet, taken as a whole, a very strong impression indeed was produced by, or at least produced along with, it. Carew felt that her character was becoming gradually clear to him, like a summer landscape appearing through a gauzy mist. He was conscious of an odd mixture in her of gaiety and of wondering tenderness. She seemed constantly to be struck with the humorous side of a world of which personally she had had no rude experience ; and her fancy moved with a kind of mischievous buoyancy, like a star of sunlight dipping and floating upon the sea. Indeed, she somehow conveyed the idea that all life had

been a playground to her, into which she had been turned loose ; and that what she divined or knew of its sadness and its deeper realities she had found out for herself in the course of a lonely holiday.

It was not by her words only that this impression was conveyed. It was conveyed by her looks, and the naïve grace of her movements—sometimes by their infantine petulance, and by the childish mishaps which, as she bent over her drawing, would bring her light cloud of hair straying downwards across her eyes.

There was something more also. Here and there in the middle of her ordinary conversation—her musical succession of unremembered sentences—a sentence would escape her of quite a different kind, which shone out from among the others like a coloured lamp amongst leaves, and made them flush with the hue of its own suggestions. These sentences stamped themselves on Carew's mind, and tended to make the girl's character a puzzle to him. What, for instance, he asked, could she have been thinking of when, at dinner, she said that most people would be glad to go back in their lives for some things—to do them again, or not to do them at all? And now, when she was drawing him, she once looked solemnly up at him, and said without a smile or any symptom of flinching :—

‘Mr. Carew, I want you to tell me something. Do you think I am very forward?’

‘Forward!’ he said, laughing. ‘No. Why should I think you so?’

‘I think it was very forward of me to say I would do your picture. I should have waited, if I had wished to do it—and I did wish that ; I wished it very much—and I should have fished for you to ask me.’

‘Why,’ he asked, ‘do you think you should have done that?’

‘Other people would have done so,’ she said, ‘wouldn't they? You must know. Other people wouldn't tell a man that they wanted to do his picture. Mamma would say

that it wasn't modest to do so—or proper—I think that's her word. Mamma thinks at times that I'm not at all a proper person. Proper!' she repeated, as if thinking the matter over—'I can't tell what's proper. I always say out just what I think.'

'And so,' Carew persisted, 'you did wish to draw me, then?'

'I did,' she said, quite simply. 'I wished to draw you the moment you mentioned drawing. Yes,' she added, 'from quite the very first moment. Mr. Carew, sit still. I am trying to get your mouth.'

What, thought Carew, did this little episode betoken? Had she been a coquette of the most accomplished kind, she could hardly have introduced in a more decided way that element into their acquaintance which a coquette would desire to find in it.

A similar incident happened late in the afternoon. Carew had retired to his room to write a number of business letters; the General and his wife had been occupied in the same way; and Miss Capel had gone off for a short walk by herself, to do a little exploration on her own account. She returned at about five o'clock, and found the others round the tea-table. She had on her hat and gloves, and she paused in the doorway, leaning on a slim gold-headed walking-stick.

'May I come in?' she said, 'or must I go up and change my things?'

'Come in,' said Carew, 'come in.'

But she still stood there for a moment, as if she were bent on tantalising him.

'I'm longing,' she said, 'to tell Mr. Carew all the places I've been to. I'm positively longing.'

'Well,' said Carew, 'don't keep us all in the draught. Suppose that you shut the door and give us a description of your wanderings.'

She began to do this as well as she could, and up to a certain point he saw clearly the path she had taken; but when she had brought herself to the edge of a neighbour-

ing wood, when she followed the windings of a certain shadowy footpath, and at last arrived at an old ruinous fountain, he could only conceive that her description was faulty, or admit that she had hit on a spot which was as yet unknown to himself.

'Mamma,' she exclaimed at last, 'what do you think? I know the grounds of Mr. Carew's castle better than he knows them himself. If,' she continued, speaking to him only, 'you are able to walk before I go away, I will take you to my fountain, and show you I have not invented it. Will you come?'

Carew said 'Yes.'

'I don't believe you will,' she replied. 'Men never mean what they say. But I should like to take you. Yes, I am determined to take you. Fancy,' she added, as if the reflection pleased her—'fancy my taking Mr. Carew for a walk!'

She had asked him already if he considered her forward, and her present proposal recalled the question to his mind. He smiled as, looking into her clear eyes, he thought of it. He would as soon have attributed forwardness to a blue-eyed child in its cradle.

The walk at once assumed a prominent place in his prospects. He thought how delightful it would be to be lost in some lonely wood with her. His ankle, however, still kept him a cripple, so, though he would willingly have gone off at once with her, he had to postpone the pleasure at any rate till to-morrow. The rest of the day passed much like the earlier part of it, except that, in a way he was hardly conscious of, his intimacy with his companion was growing silently closer, and every idle and unregarded hour added a thread to the chain that was fast binding them. He would have accepted the situation for the present, enjoying without examining it; but, during the evening, once again she startled him.

She had been singing a little, and he was standing by her at the piano. A song had been just ended; he was

engaged in looking out another for her, and she was striking a few careless chords in the interval. Presently some instinct made him turn and look at her. She was watching him intently, and he felt that she had been doing so for some moments. When their eyes met she showed no sign of confusion. She only smiled a little, but she did not withdraw her gaze. It remained as steadfast as if Greuze had painted it. At last she began softly humming to the stray notes as she struck them, and then, abruptly, but in a tone equally soft :—

‘I am not,’ she said, ‘going to do any more to your picture.’

‘Why not?’ he asked.

After a pause she answered him.

‘Because,’ she said, making a louder noise with the chords—‘because—do you know this, Mr. Carew?—it’s very bad for me to look at you. I am not going to do so—ever—ever—ever any more.’

‘Never any more!’ said Carew.

‘Of course,’ she said, laughing, ‘I shall look at you enough to avoid running against you in the passage, or spilling any slops over you when I come for more tea. I shall look at you just enough, perhaps, to prevent your thinking me rude. But that’s all. Do you understand?’

‘No,’ said Carew, ‘I don’t; and I don’t believe it. Why do you say that it is bad for you to look at me?’

‘For many reasons,’ she said—‘for many, many reasons.’ She stopped playing suddenly, and he heard a faint sigh come from her. ‘You couldn’t understand them. Men can understand nothing. No, Mr. Carew, no picture to-morrow.’

‘Come,’ said the voice of Mrs. Capel from the farther end of the room, ‘we are waiting for another song, Violet. Are you not going to give us one?’

‘No,’ said Miss Capel, rising, ‘I have no more voice, mamma. I have sung enough for this evening. Have you the key of my album? I am going to show Mr. Carew my photographs.’

'It is upstairs,' said her mother, 'on my chain, where you asked me to put it. If you want to show your photographs, you must do so to-morrow.'

'Very well, then,' she said, 'I will show him my poetry books over again. I don't believe he has half looked at them.'

'No,' said Carew, 'I am sure I have not seen this one.'

She tried to take it from him, but he was too quick for her. 'Why,' he asked, 'don't you want me to look at it?'

'Oh,' she said, 'it is not what you would care for.' He read the title. It was 'Songs of the Soul's Life.'

'Look at it if you like,' she went on. 'Oh, there are no secrets in it.' He found it was a selection from various well-known writers, of poems bearing on moral and spiritual struggles; and he noted, with some wonder, as he turned the pages over, that they were marked in many places. 'Are they your marks?' he asked.

'Some,' she said, gently but indifferently. 'Most, I think, were made by the person who gave the book to me.'

'I like this,' said Carew—'this poem on Prayer;' and he paused, reading a sonnet which had first arrested his eye by the deep lines underscoring its last couplet. The couplet itself, when he read it, he found even more striking. It was this:—

Is there a wish for which you dare not pray?

Then pray to God to take that wish away.

He raised his eyes to Miss Capel, in half-incredulous wonder as to what such a passage could possibly have to do with her. She seemed to understand the look, and said with a trace of flippancy, 'I don't know what it was I was supposed to wish for, so dreadful that I might not pray for it.'

'Mr. Carew,' Mrs. Capel here interposed, 'do you know what the time is? It is actually past eleven. You must allow me to say good-night to you. I must take off Violet too; and you must finish your discussions, and she must show you her photographs, to-morrow.'

'I had thought,' said Carew, 'that to-morrow we might

manage a little picnic to a place on the sea just beyond Nice, called Beaulieu. There will be time, however, to settle about that in the morning. Look, Miss Capel: since I am not to inspect your album, I shall take upstairs with me a certain volume of poetry.'

Before he went to sleep he turned to the same sonnet, again wondering what could be its application to her. Then he glanced at some of the other poems; but his whole attention was suddenly drawn away from them by an inscription on the fly-leaf, and a copy of verses under it, plainly in a man's handwriting. The verses were dated Calais, the Christmas Day of two years ago, and the inscription was simply, 'To V. C. at Naples.' The verses were not remarkable for much literary excellence, but they kept Carew wakeful for many hours that night. They were as follows:—

*Yesterday a cloudless sky was glowing,
 All the flowers were flowering yesterday;
 And to-day a bitter east is blowing,
 Flowerless all the flowers, the skys are grey.
 Yesterday there breathed a life beside me—
 Now the lips and eyes are far away.
 Deep in memories of the past I hide me,
 And I pray for her, what'er betide me,
 Every wish for which I dare to pray.*

CHAPTER VI.

DISCORDS.

IF Carew was inclined, and indeed he was inclined, to allow the verses to haunt him the following morning, the arrival of the post at once put them out of his mind, and for the time being gave him something more pressing to think about. The General, it appeared, had received a letter from Genoa which begged him to come there some days sooner than he had intended. Having followed him from Nice to Cannes, and from Cannes on to the château, it had been consider-

ably delayed upon the road ; and if he were to act on the urgent request contained in it, he and his party would have to start immediately.

Here was, indeed, a blow to Carew's whole prospects. The enchanting cup that was being just raised to his lips was to be dashed at once to the ground, before he had more than tasted the foam of it. He anxiously asked the General if the matter was very pressing. It was, the General said ; it was a matter not of pleasure but of business. He was largely interested in the Genoese Tramways, and there was to be a meeting of the shareholders, at which he must be present if possible. The meeting had been at first fixed for Friday ; the date had now been altered to Tuesday ; to-day was Sunday ; and, accordingly, at the latest, it would be absolutely necessary for them to leave by to-morrow evening.

As soon as Carew learnt that it was a matter of business, a ray of hope again brightened the situation. Why, he asked, should the General not go alone, leave his wife and daughter at the château behind him, and return to them, and finish his visit, on his way back to Cannes ? Why not ? There was only one valid answer, and that was their fear of trespassing on their host's hospitality. This was expressed in the most courteous and delicate way, and Carew could see that it was perfectly unaffected. The same was apparent, however, with regard to his own wishes ; and as soon as the General and his wife were convinced that such was the case, they agreed to his plan with almost as much pleasure as he himself evinced when he saw that they were going to do so.

'And now,' he went on, 'that being settled satisfactorily, what do you say to this as a little scheme for to-morrow ? I was talking last night about a picnic at Beaulieu. Now the General's train, which leaves Nice about five, passes Beaulieu about twenty minutes later. What I propose is that we go there for our picnic to-morrow, and leave the General, on our way home, at the station.'

This, again, seemed perfectly satisfactory, and nothing was wanting but to communicate the arrangements to Miss Capel. She, however, was not to be seen. She had left the room, without saying a word, the moment she had heard the contents of her father's letter, and it was presently found, on inquiring, that she had gone out of doors.

'You are beginning, Mr. Carew,' said Mrs. Capel, 'to walk so much better again. Why don't you go out and look for her? She's sure to be on the terrace. Poor child, she will be in raptures with all your kindness! The General and I shall have some letter-writing to get over. Do, Mr. Carew, go out and look for Violet.'

'I suppose,' smiled the General as he was preparing to go off with his wife, 'this being Sunday, we ought to be all at church. But my motto has always been that of the monks, *Qui laborat orat*. It is about the only piece of monkery that applies to the modern world.'

Carew was no sooner left alone than he went out eagerly, and began a search for Miss Capel. He walked several times round the château; he asked the men at the stables if she had gone down the front drive, and he then descended into the mazy walks of the gardens; but he could neither see nor hear of her. Meanwhile his thoughts went straying back to that day a week ago, and to the scene at morning Mass; and all life, with its changes, began to seem to him like a dream, so quickly did one phantom supplant another in it, so readily did the phantom he was even now seeking elude him.

At last, out of spirits, he again mounted to the ramparts, hoping, but hoping in vain, for Miss Capel's figure somewhere. There was not a soul stirring. He was standing on the spot from which, such a short while since, his grand party had watched the display of fireworks. Just under the walls were the tiled roofs of the village, and a bare patch of ground, where the children were accustomed to play. It chanced that here he looked over the parapet; and down below, seated on a broken mill-stone, he saw Miss Capel

talking to a little sun-browned child. He was about to call her, but his voice checked itself. For a moment he remained watching her. Her bright spotted dress and her parasol lying beside her gave a charm to the sight merely as a piece of colour; but what specially struck him was a sad tenderness in her attitude, and still more in the smile that he saw was playing upon her face, like the upward flickering light reflected from the running water. At last he uttered her name. She looked up and rose; and, patting the child on the cheek, pointed to a neighbouring turret, through which by a narrow stair there was a way up to the ramparts. Carew went forward to meet her. Her movements were more quick than his, and when he reached the top of the stair she was just emerging. Her face was sadder than he had ever seen it before. Her eyes shone with a light that suggested recent tears, and her cheeks were like flowers that had just been rained upon.

‘I have been looking for you,’ he said, ‘everywhere. Where on earth have you been?’

She turned her head towards the village. ‘I have been to church,’ she said.

‘Alone? And why did you not let us know that you were going?’

‘What would have been the good?’ she said. ‘*They* never go, and I don’t suppose you do. I do everything alone.’

Carew looked at her with a new sensation of wonder. ‘You have not been alone,’ he said gently, ‘since you have been here, have you?’

‘That,’ she murmured, ‘will be all over to-morrow.’

‘No, it won’t,’ he exclaimed with a sudden glow of delight as he discerned the extent of the regret he was about to dispel. ‘I have been trying to find you everywhere on purpose to tell you this. You and your mother are to stay here with me. Your father is to go to Genoa by himself; after that he is going to come back here; and as for to-morrow, we are all of us going for a picnic, and shall set him down at Beaulieu station in the evening.’

She looked at first as if she could hardly believe the news. But presently the sun once more shone out in her eyes; her whole face made an artless confession of pleasure; and gently coming close to him, she so extended her hand that he for a short moment took it in both of his.

‘Tell me,’ he said to her by-and-by when luncheon was ended, ‘are you going to do any more to my picture, or are you not?’

‘You can walk now,’ she said, ‘so I am going to take you out walking—that is to say, if you will come. I am going to show you the fountain I discovered, and which you believe I have invented. No,’ she went on, in answer to his glance towards her parents, ‘they are not coming. They have papers—business—all sorts of things to settle this afternoon. You must come with me quite by yourself; unless you think you will be too much bored with my company. Mamma, do you hear this? I am going to show Mr. Carew his own fountain.’

When she first began to speak, there had seemed something half clandestine in her proposal; but, though she was evidently pleased at the prospect of being alone with him, the idea of concealment had apparently not entered her mind.

‘Go, then,’ said Mrs. Capel, ‘and put your things on quickly: or else you will be losing the best part of the day. You always take so long in getting yourself ready for anything. Come, Mr. Carew, whilst Violet is upstairs you shall see that book of her photographs which she wanted to exhibit to you last night.’

Carew with considerable interest watched the unlocking of the volume. His quick eye, amongst the opening pages, at once caught a vision of landscapes, yachts, and faces, and of these last, he hardly knew how or why, he received an impression that the greater number were men. ‘That,’ said Mrs. Capel, beginning at the very beginning—‘that is the General’s yacht. The picture was done at Naples. You see Violet there, in a sailor’s hat, under the awning. That

group—I dare say you can see where that was done—it was in the Club garden at Cowes. Violet is there too—a little in the background. ‘There are some other faces there which I dare say you will recognise.’ Mrs. Capel was right; he did recognise some of them; and they were not faces that it gave him much pleasure to see. Then followed views of various Continental towns, such as Trouville, Homburg, and Florence; and the views of each town were accompanied by some groups, as a souvenir; several of which had been taken, it seemed, at races, and in all of which Miss Capel’s figure was visible. To these succeeded some pages of single portraits. They were mostly men, as Carew had imagined they would be. They were also mostly foreigners; and he fancied that he could catch a trace of pique in his voice as, passing from one languishing young exquisite to another, he asked, ‘Who is this?’ or ‘Pray, and who may that be?’ Mrs. Capel spoke of none of them with much enthusiasm; and was passing them rapidly over, in search for a château in Hungary, in which, she said, they had passed the previous autumn, when Carew exclaimed, ‘Wait just for one moment. Who was that man—the one you turned over this instant?’

‘Which?’ said Mrs. Capel.

‘Not a young man—an old man—a man with a black moustache, and exceedingly well-curved hair. This one—yes, this is the one I mean.’

‘What,’ said Mrs. Capel, with a tone of slight embarrassment, ‘do you find to interest you there? Do you think it’s a wise face?’

‘Surely,’ said Carew, ‘that must be the Prince de Vauclose, the grandson of Napoleon’s old army contractor. I thought I saw him in that group in the Club garden at Cowes.’

‘You are right,’ Mrs. Capel began, but she was interrupted by a voice over her shoulder. ‘Mamma,’ it said, ‘what are you showing my book to Mr. Carew for?—and that page too? Please shut it up. Why need you be always

turning to it? And the key—I must have my key. Remember, mamma,' she said with a smile as she took it, 'I am never going to let that out of my own possession again. And now—now, if Mr. Carew's quite ready, I'm going to take him off for this walk I told him of.'

Carew had rarely enjoyed a moment more than that when they found themselves together in the open air, his companion's eyes glancing close beside him, and the scented pine-wood, for whose shade they were bound, fronting them. Miss Capel, he found, had been quite correct in her description. She had made what to him was quite a new discovery, and at the end of a path which had possibly once been gravelled, but which now was nothing more than a neglected clearing in the underwood, an abrupt turn brought them to a little hollow or dingle, its entrance guarded by two mutilated statues. There, embedded in a bank of rocks and ferns, was the fountain of which Miss Capel had spoken. It was an old basin, gleaming with dark water, and arched over by a shell-shaped canopy of brickwork.

'Look, Mr. Carew,' she exclaimed, 'don't you call this delicious? Don't you thank me very much for having discovered it?'

'I thank you,' he said, looking at her with a gravity he was hardly conscious of—'I thank you far more for having come yourself to show it me.'

The words seemed to sink into her like a stone into deep water, and she returned his look with a sort of wondering gratitude.

'Mr. Carew,' she murmured at last, 'how can you say such things? It is you who ought to be thanked for coming to walk with me.'

She had seated herself on the rim of the basin, and now, looking down into the dark and gloomy reflections, she began to splash the water with the tip of her parasol. At last Miss Capel, not raising her eyes, but still watching the water and continuing to play with it, said with a forced

flippancy, 'Well, Mr. Carew, will you have the kindness to make a remark?'

'I was,' he said, 'just going to do so. I was looking last night at that collection of poems you have. You know the book I mean, don't you?' She assented. 'I was reading,' he went on, 'the verses at the beginning—those in manuscript. I see you have an accomplished poet amongst your friends.'

'The person who wrote that,' she said gently, 'was no friend of mine: and I should have torn those verses out if they hadn't been rather pretty. It's horribly ungrateful of me to say so; for he wished to do me good. He wished to improve me. He thought me, I believe, very wicked. But one can't be grateful merely because one ought to be. Can one, Mr. Carew?'

'May I ask,' he said, 'who the person was?'

'Certainly,' she replied carelessly, 'there's not the least secret about it.'

'Then was it the Prince de Vauclose?'

'The Prince!' she exclaimed, with a light ironical laugh. 'What a notion! I don't suppose he knows what poetry is—except that it's something which has nothing to do with races. Besides, the Prince thinks me so perfect that there is no need to improve me. No—the person who wrote those verses was a sort of cousin of the General's—an English cousin.'

'Oh!' said Carew, relieved, 'a relation of yours.'

'Didn't you know?' she said, 'and yet I suppose you didn't—how should you?—that the General is not my father? He is only my step-father. I took his name, and he is going to leave some money to me. There's another interesting fact which, perhaps, you did not know either. I'm an heiress. Mr. Carew, I'm afraid you're not attending. Why are you knocking those leaves about with your stick? Don't you find all this that I tell you very exciting?'

'No,' said Carew, with a certain dryness in his tone, 'I can't say I do.'

‘Mr. Carew,’ she said. He looked up at her, and he saw in her eyes a soft provoking mockery. ‘Are you,’ she went on, ‘not a fortune-hunter?’

‘Should you wish,’ he said, ‘to be married for the sake of your fortune?’

‘I think,’ she murmured, her voice getting tender again for an instant—‘I think it would be too horrible. However, don’t pity me. There is no chance of that ever happening.’

‘How do you know that?’ he said.

‘How do I know that!’ she repeated deliberately, and in a manner that was half absent and half teasing. ‘Perhaps I don’t know it; perhaps I only conjecture. Or, Mr. Carew, this is just possible—perhaps I know it because I am already bespoken. *Bespoke*—*bespoken*—which is the right thing to say?’

Carew was seated on the trunk of a fallen tree, his eyes fixed on the ground. He neither looked up nor spoke. He merely continued the application of his stick to the leaves with an air of deeper preoccupation.

‘Mr. Carew,’ said Miss Capel, after some moments’ silence, ‘why don’t you answer my question?’

‘What question? I was not aware that you had asked me any.’

‘Yes, I did. I asked you a question of grammar. Which is it right to say—*bespoke* or *bespoken*?’

Carew muttered something that was like the shadow of an oath, and struck his stick on the ground with such violence as to break it. When next Miss Capel spoke the tone of her voice was changed. It was soft, regretful, tender.

‘Are you angry?’ she said. ‘Why should you be?’

‘I am not angry,’ said Carew, in a constrained voice, rising and turning away from her.

‘Yes, you are,’ she said; and she slipped down from her seat, and, going up to him, looked him full in the face. ‘You are angry. Will you please not be?’ She put out her hand, and held him by one of the buttons of his coat.

‘Mr. Carew, will you please not be angry any longer? I want you, if you will, to let me do one thing.’

‘Well,’ he said, taking her hand and smiling.

‘I want you to allow me to go on doing your picture. Come in, will you? Do you mind? If only the light lasts I might do a little now.’

CHAPTER VII.

THE SIREN’S SPELL.

THEY were to start for the picnic by eleven o’clock next day, and the carriage, freighted with hampers, was waiting at the door punctually.

‘The General and Violet will be down directly,’ said Mrs. Capel to Carew as she entered the drawing-room. ‘Will you kindly fasten this last hook of my cloak for me? Thank you.’

Then, as if the performance of the slight office had put him for the moment on a footing of greater intimacy with her, she laid her hand on her daughter’s locked book of photographs, and said rather sadly:—

‘You know the Prince de Vaucuse, do you?’

‘Hardly,’ said Carew. ‘But he was once to be seen about a good deal in London society.’

‘Of course,’ said Mrs. Capel—‘of course I know all that, and he is now one of the very smartest men in Paris.’

‘My acquaintance with him,’ said Carew, ‘was confined to seeing him at “The Travellers,” where every afternoon he filled up a large arm-chair—I see him now with the light on his turquoise rings—and drank sweet curaçoa out of a claret-glass.’

‘I hope,’ said Mrs. Capel, ‘that he’s better in that way now. He’s a great admirer of Violet’s. In fact, he is engaged to be married to her.’

‘Indeed!’ said Carew, trying to speak with indifference. ‘When?’

Mrs. Capel raised her eyebrows with an odd expression of gentle but unwilling resignation.

‘Not yet,’ she said, ‘not yet. The General insisted that she should wait for some months longer. If the Prince likes, he will be allowed to claim her in May; but I hope myself—well, we shall see what happens. I can’t imagine, for my own part, what my child can see in him.’

She had hardly finished speaking when the General and Miss Capel appeared, and in a few moments they had all set off on their expedition. The day was so bright and exhilarating, and the country looked so beautiful, that expressions of admiration and pleasure supplied at first the equivalent to an animated conversation; but after this came the usual succession of silences, and then Carew began to turn his thoughts inwards, and ask himself what effect Mrs. Capel’s news had had on him. He had not been quite unprepared for it; but, all the same, when he heard it it affected him something like a slight electric shock. He was, however, further aware of this: the shock, being slight, had not been wholly disagreeable. It contained, no doubt, elements of pain, of pique, of disappointment, and of jealousy; but through all these there came tingling a sensation of triumph and of possession. That lovely form that was breathing and blushing close to him, those eyes with the colour and light in them of a tremulous morning sea—he was sure, or he was almost sure, that, whoever might claim them some day, for the present moment they belonged to him more completely than to anybody else in the world; and every smile, movement, or rippling laugh of hers seemed like a music that was part of his own life.

This feeling, through the whole course of the drive—this feeling of his possession of *her*—was constantly receiving food from the countless minute ways in which she seemed to assume possession of *him*. Most of them were wholly imperceptible to any one but their two selves. Sometimes, however, they were more open and undisguised, and Carew was surprised, on more than one occasion, at her

almost parading—so it seemed—the footing on which she was with him.

‘Mr. Carew, talk,’ she said, after he had been silent for longer than usual. ‘Say something to amuse us ; or, if you can’t do that, to instruct us. You won’t? Well, repeat us a piece of poetry.’

‘Violet,’ exclaimed Mrs. Capel, ‘Mr. Carew will think you a lunatic.’

‘Mamma,’ Miss Capel continued, apparently not hearing the interruption, ‘if Mr. Carew won’t repeat any poetry, I will repeat some. Listen !’

And with a grave face and a demure mechanical sing-song, she began :—

Yesterday a cloudless sky was glowing,
All the flowers were flowering yesterday ;
And to-day a bitter east is blowing—

Blowing—blowing—blowing. Mamma—Mr. Carew—don’t you think that’s beautiful? I call it most touching. I don’t know what you do.’

A slight shade of annoyance passed over Carew’s face, and Mrs. Capel again interposed with a remonstrance. But the girl’s eyes were full of a mischievous determination, and, with a graceful doggedness, she repeated the aimless question. ‘Don’t you think those verses are very touching? See, I try to make conversation, and no one will keep it up. Mr. Carew, if you don’t like poetry, suppose we try grammar. Tell us something, will you, about the auxiliary verbs?’

‘Violet!’ exclaimed Mrs. Capel, actually frowning, for a wonder, ‘we shall think you are gone crazy.’

‘Mr. Carew, mamma, is a great authority on English grammar, and he gave me a lecture yesterday—or, rather, he would not give me a lecture—on the formation of the past participle.’

When this conversation was taking place they were fast nearing their destination, and Carew was here obliged to stand up, in order to give the coachman some directions

about the road. The scene of the picnic was to be a certain secluded spot, almost hidden by woods, at the end of a long promontory. It was hard to find, to any one who did not know the locality, and his guidance was now required almost constantly till they arrived at it. The subject of English grammar was, therefore, allowed to drop; but just as the carriage drew up, and the door was being forced open, Miss Capel said, with the same look in her eyes, 'Mr. Carew, I want you to tell us this. Which is right—*bespoke* or *bespoken*?'

The look, the tone, the question, all jarred upon Carew. He could not tell why, but, each and all, they irritated him, and half the charm of the drive seemed tarnished by this incident at its ending. To hide such a feeling he set himself with double diligence to help the servants in unpacking the hampers; but when Miss Capel came to join in the operation, he could not, try as he would, keep a slight frost from his manner.

She, for her part, seemed not to notice this, and all her former appealing ways had returned to her, though he might have detected in them a certain trace of timidity. He did detect it at last, but not till after many minutes of blindness. He detected it in her gentle, almost humble tone, when she asked him if he would help her in carrying some bottles of wine, which it was thought advisable to cool in a brook close by. He did as she asked him, and they walked off together, and arranged their bottles in a satisfactory position; then, just as they were about to go back again, she laid her hand on his arm, and, looking into his eyes sadly, 'Are you angry,' she said, 'because I teased you in the carriage? Nobody but you knew what I was laughing at. It's not that I want to laugh; I can tell you that truly. Mr. Carew, please not to be angry with me any more.'

The effect of the prayer was instant, and when they returned to the table-cloth, which was by this time well covered with dishes, the cloud that had gathered between them had quite melted away. The General and Mrs. Capel

were both charmed with the spot, and were full of Carew's praises for his happy judgment in choosing it. It was a little grassy common jutting into the sea, like a mulberry-leaf. It was tufted with gorse and rosemary, and backed by a belt of fir-woods ; and the woods, with their faint smell of turpentine and their murmur, mixed in the morning with the smell and murmur of the sea.

The luncheon passed off in the most agreeable manner possible, and the General, when it was over, brought out his cigar-case. His eye had been caught by a distant mountain fort which was being constructed on one of the heights above Nice ; and the taste of tobacco having unloosed his tongue, he was soon giving Carew an elaborate lecture on the various errors the engineers had committed. Carew's civility was put to a severe test. He had promised himself a walk all alone with Miss Capel, and now what had happened ? He could hardly even steal a look at her. At last matters came to a crisis. She rose, opened her parasol, and strolled away by herself. But the General still went on ; he was on a favourite subject ; and, to crown all, he presently made Carew walk off with him, and away from Miss Capel, to a distance, in order to get a glimpse of the harbour works at Villefranche. Carew felt as he went that his feet were made of lead. He could hardly force them to go on this most unwilling pilgrimage, and never before had ten minutes seemed so much like two long hours to him. At last, however, he was back again at the scene of the luncheon. Mrs. Capel was still sitting there, attentively reading a copy of the ' Baltimore Weekly Sun ' ; but as for Miss Capel, what had become of her ? This was the question which Carew asked at once. Mrs. Capel looked slowly round.

' I don't know,' she said ; ' she has gone off somewhere by herself.'

' Ah !' said Carew, ' there she is, just going round that point.'

' I believe,' said Mrs. Capel, ' there's an old tower she

wants to look at. Go to her, Mr. Carew ; go and help her. The General and I will follow you. I walk rather slowly ; and besides, I want to show him an article in this paper.'

Carew did not wait to be told twice. He was off at a rapid pace in the direction of the disappearing figure, which, clearly defined, with its outlines, against the sea, had all the distinctness of an object quite near, and yet impressed the imagination as if it were very far off. It was some moments before she caught sight of him, but when she did so she at once stood still. When he came up to her, her face was bright with a smile, and her very soul seemed in her eyes, greeting him : but at the same time she was panting, and pressing her hand to her heart.

'I thought,' she said, 'you were not going to come at all.'

'It was the General kept me,' said Carew. 'Are you out of breath?'

'No,' she said, 'it is only that I was so glad when I saw you coming at last. Do I look glad? I'm afraid I do—a great deal too glad. I can never hide my feelings—never : that's the worst of me.'

'I wish,' said Carew, 'I could but believe that.'

'What?—that that is the worst of me?'

'No,' he said, 'but that you really show your feelings—perhaps I should say, that you really feel what you show.'

'I have not,' she said, 'hidden them from you, certainly. I have shown them a great deal too plainly.'

'To-day, for instance,' said Carew, 'in the carriage.'

'What, Mr. Carew : are you angry about that still—because I teased you about those verses? Why should you be? I could tease you again now. It was not that I wanted to laugh, as I said before to you. I was much more inclined to cry. But men are so dense, they never understand anything.'

They were making their way up a rugged and rocky slope, on the brow of which stood the tower which Miss Capel desired to reach ; and the difficulties of the scramble made a pause here in the conversation. The first to speak

again was Carew, and he did so just as they were at the dark door of the building.

‘I understand one thing,’ he said, ‘I do understand one thing.’

‘What thing?’ she asked.

‘I understand,’ he said—‘we have not decided how to put it grammatically—I understand that you *are* bespoken.’

Her cheeks flushed, and her sensitive lips parted, not to speak, but merely in helpless trouble. At the same moment she was spared from attempting any answer to him by a quavering voice which was heard addressing them from the interior; and directly afterwards an old woman appeared, who lived in the tower, and was accustomed to show it to visitors. They followed her in, and she began her usual explanations—how the tower was built in the reign of Louis the Fourteenth; how there was once a fort round it, and so on; and how the Great Napoleon had passed two nights in it. There was a prison to be seen, and several small rooms; and by-and-by they mounted to the roof. The old woman did not follow them there. They were alone. But each, for some reason, seemed to have grown shy of the other, and neither offered to resume the interrupted conversation. Instead of that they leaned over the battlements in silence; or if they spoke, it was only to comment on some trivial object.

At last Miss Capel said, ‘See, in the distance there are mamma and the General coming. We had better go down and meet them. What is the use of our remaining here like this?’

She spoke very softly; her voice was almost a whisper; and she moved towards the opening of the stair by which they had mounted.

‘Let me go first,’ said Carew, in a voice almost as low as her own. ‘The steps are worn and slippery.’

He placed himself in the narrow doorway; his foot was on the first step: but there he paused and again looked at his companion, as if expecting some answer that had not yet been given him. She seemed to divine his thoughts, and to

know that he still was dwelling on that one fact which he said he did understand about her ; to know also that he was waiting for some answer. He saw, as he looked at her, that she was struggling to command her voice ; but her eyes were like messengers, hurrying on before it. At last the voice came.

‘Oh, why,’ she said, ‘do you talk about such things ? It will not be for a long time. Why need we think about it now?’

The words and the look were full of a pleading sadness, and expressed a trust in him so complete and intimate, that it might have been called passionate had it not been so cloudless also. They were standing close together. Carew said nothing. He merely, as she spoke, drew her towards himself. She came unresistingly into the fold of his arms, and, bending down, he kissed her. Then they descended the stairs. In touching her lips he felt as if he had touched a flower.

During the drive home, sunk deep in a reverie, he kept asking himself, ‘Was the flower a lotus or a forget-me-not?’

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRUGGLE IN SLEEP.

ON their return that night, the General having duly left them, the little dinner of three had for all of them a peculiar charm :—not that the General was not missed ; he *was* missed ; and the charm consisted precisely in the sense of intimacy, produced by the fact that they all had a loss in common. The homely evening that followed made the charm complete. Carew was surprised to find how all sorts of kindly thoughts, all sorts of small tastes and sympathies, which, so far as expression went, were usually frozen by his reserve, now began to declare themselves almost unintentionally, like drops of water from snows when they begin to thaw ; and when the two ladies had gone to bed, he subsided again into his chair, and thought his situation over.

All that day, as if in a half-trance, he felt he had been drifting into a kind of fairyland. He remembered that in the morning there had been a few little far-off troubles ; but they had been over long ago. The touch of those lips that met his on the tower had been for him literally a kiss of peace ; and there had fallen on his mind the same sort of expectant calm that breathes and sleeps over a murmuring moonlit sea. He knew enough, however, of the ways of the heart's weather to know that such calms were often extremely treacherous. At present, he said to himself, he was in love delightfully. Was there any danger, he asked, of his becoming in love dangerously ? And then he wavered, and asked, was he really in love at all ? These questions, he found, were strangely pleasant to dwell upon ; and to clear his judgment about them he went out into the moonlight.

The moonlight made the answers no more certain ; but there was an element of pleasure in their very uncertainty. He was certain of one thing only, and this was that whatever might be his relations to Miss Capel, her presence and influence made a magic circle round him, which kept, for the time at least, a world of troubles away from him. He felt that within that circle he had somehow grown years younger again. The desolating anxieties with which thought had made him familiar could not disappear, indeed, but they became semi-transparent phantoms. The voices of men asking in vain for spiritual guidance, the growth of democracy uneasily chafing for change, dwindled in his ears to a faint noise in a dream ; and the things close to him resumed their old reality. The crisp rustle of the palm fronds, the softer whispering of the orange-trees, the moonlight sleeping on the antique walls of the château, and the light from within that glowed at a certain window—these were the sights, these were the sounds which once more seemed to him to touch what is deeper in man's nature. Miss Capel was there above him, behind that lighted window ; but her spirit, he felt, was everywhere. It glided in and out amongst the orange-trees ; it was wandering below in the gardens ; it floated up to

him from the beds of violets. Was there danger in this—danger to him, to her? Was sorrow somehow lying in wait for either of them? The voice of the garden seemed to answer ‘No!’ and, breathing about his pillow as he softly sank to sleep, whispered that in love like this there was delight but no danger.

This comfortable but somewhat visionary conclusion was hardly borne out by the next two days’ experience. He did not, indeed, himself call it in question; but that was only because he was too much preoccupied to criticise it, and the hours flowed by in a stream of enchanted feeling, whose surface no obstacle fretted or troubled into thought. He discovered, it is true, during the course of the very next morning, when she resumed her work at his picture, that she not only distracted his mind from the subjects which used to absorb him, but that she could hardly herself understand what those subjects were. She knew as little of politics as if they were brewing or paper-making; and when, in allusion to the neighbouring room which he had shown her, he happened to say that he was interested in political economy, she repeated the two words with a soft contemptuous wonder as if they meant to her as little as Mumbo Jumbo. This discovery he did reflect upon for a moment; for a moment it disappointed him; then he looked into her eyes and acquiesced in it. Nor was she, indeed, wanting in qualities by which this defect was atoned for. In poetry of the lyrical and more emotional kind she was exceedingly well read, and had a singularly sensitive appreciation of it; and in her own remarks on the emotional side of life not only was the same appreciation observable, but a certain shrewdness mixed with a dreamy pathos, which seemed to indicate that she had been at school under experience.

As to her engagement, as if by some tacit understanding, that was not again referred to; and as to their own affection, instinct taught both of them that they could indulge in it with the greatest ease by frankly and cheerfully ignoring it. By the morning after the picnic, the image of the Prince

de Vacluse, at least in Carew's mind, had receded into the background. It was lost amongst a multitude of other banished anxieties. Standing by the easel to watch how his portrait was progressing, he once more stooped down, and touched the lips of his flower. She raised her face to his, and to-day was joined to yesterday. The present closed about them like a cloud, hiding from them with a luminous mirage the hard world of consequences. They began to live and breathe together in a coloured cocoon of dreams.

Mrs. Capel, who was far from strong, and had been reminded of her weakness by the fatigue she felt after the picnic, was not inclined for any more active exercise than an occasional walk along the ramparts. Thus the two others, through all the sunshiny afternoons, roofed by the cloudless sky, and breathing the siren air, wandered about together, with no company but their own. The garden was a world for them, just as if they had been children. The banks, with their shrubs, seemed to rise to visionary altitudes. The blossoms of the camellia-trees seemed to touch the clouds. Sometimes, too, they carried their explorations farther. They strayed along the neighbouring hill-sides, amongst terraced vineyards and olive-groves. They threaded the peasants' footpaths; they listened to the headlong brooks; they plucked maidenhair from the crevices of wet rocks.

A day or two later, however, Miss Capel informed her mother that she had had a letter from some girl who had been at school with her. The contents of the letter, which she discussed in Carew's hearing, seemed to him trivial and indifferent enough; but he noticed at the time a slight change in her manner—a slight sadness, a slight increase of thoughtfulness; and by-and-by, when they were by themselves in the garden, this change, which in the interval he had thought might be only his fancy, again struck him, and struck him as unmistakable. She was sitting on a seat, under an arch of myrtle; and he was standing a pace or two off, in front of her. Content and happy in the mere sense of her neighbourhood, he was not looking at her, but

with a lazy smile of amusement, was watching the movements of a long procession of caterpillars. Meanwhile her eyes had been fixed on him with a gentle persistence, as if nothing else were worth looking at. At last she pronounced his name; and at once he turned towards her. Never before had her face been so full of meaning; and never in her eyes, despite the smile that played in them, had there floated an expression of such sad alluring tenderness.

‘Mr. Carew,’ she said with a grave simplicity, ‘I don’t think I can ever let you go away from me.’

Carew had never in words made her a direct declaration of any kind. She, indeed, had been far franker than he; and though she, like him, had said nothing about love, she had over and over again told him how much she liked him: but her perfect straightforwardness, like perfect truth in a diplomat, had made him think she meant less than she said rather than more; and whilst adding to the piquancy of the situation had increased his sense of security in it. Now the case was different. Her words had something in them—he could not quite tell what—that thrilled him with a sense of their being really true. He paused for a moment, thinking what reply he should make to her. Words trembled on his lips almost as simple and straightforward as her own; but with an impulse whose source he had no time to analyse, he sharply repressed them, and only said regretfully, ‘It is you who are going away from me, not I from you. But why do you talk of going away? You are not going yet; and when you do—well, perhaps I shall come with you.’

She looked round her at the garden and all its flowers, as if she had not heard him. ‘Don’t you think,’ she said absently, ‘that all this is very beautiful?’ Carew replied that he did. ‘I wonder,’ she went on, ‘whether it would be equally beautiful if we were not happy in it? I think its beauty to me is, that it means my happiness.’

‘And mine too,’ said Carew. ‘It means it, it interprets it. The light in those roses is not only the sunshine. It is

the light of our two lives, which they reflect back on us, with some added light of their own.'

She suddenly began to murmur this verse of Shelley's :—

‘Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aerial hue.

Do you think our lives in your garden have been like that? Perhaps they have. Your garden will always have the same sunshine coming back to it, but never the same glow-worm. No, Mr. Carew,' she went on, trying to assume a tone of lightness, 'never, never, never the same glow-worm. Come,' she exclaimed, and she struggled still harder to command some tone of her ordinary conversational buoyancy—'come—we've had enough poetry. It's tea-time, and I'm dying for my tea—tea, and some of that beautiful cake of yours. Cake!—Mr. Carew, doesn't it make your mouth water?'

That evening the two ladies were somewhat late in coming down to dinner, and Carew was wondering what had possibly kept them, when Miss Capel entered the room, with a quicker step than usual, holding out and waving a small piece of blue paper. There was an odd brightness in her eyes, and she was humming an air of Offenbach's. 'Mr. Carew,' she exclaimed, stopping in the middle of a bar, 'didn't I say so—*never the same glow-worm?*' And she laughed with an air that tried to seem one of gaiety.

Carew could do nothing but stare at her. She put the paper into his hand. It was a telegram from the General, and the purport of it was this: his wife's presence was needed at once at Genoa. 'To-morrow morning,' said Miss Capel, 'we must go to-morrow morning.' She raised her eyes, and the brightness had quite left them.

She had hardly done speaking when her mother entered, slightly agitated, and full of regrets and apologies. There was no cause whatever for any anxiety. Her presence at Genoa was simply needed to complete some legal formalities incident to the General's business, property of hers, as well

as his being concerned in it; but the necessity of leaving the château in this unexpected way discomposed her. Still it appeared that there was no help for it; she and her daughter must be off as early as might be, next morning, hoping in a very few days to come back with the General; and Miss Capel, having submitted to the inevitable, seemed only anxious to know if the post would come before they started.

Carew was able to satisfy her with an assurance that it would, wondering, as he did so, what this anxiety meant. Then, when the practical details of the departure had been settled, they fell to consoling themselves by making various plans for the happy time when they should all be reassembled.

In this way they passed a somewhat dejected evening. All their efforts were directed to dispelling a sense of sadness; but in spite of everything it still hung in the air. Then came the two 'good-nights'; the two ladies retired, and Carew was left alone in the drawing-room. A minute or two later the door opened softly, and Miss Capel came back again. At the sight of her an impulse seized him—an impulse which surprised himself—to rush forward and fold her in his arms, and say something—his impulse was rather vague as to what. But he mastered himself, and remained perfectly still; whilst a small voice, as of a prudential conscience, continued to whisper, 'One rash word, and you will commit yourself.'

She had come back for her work-basket. Carew rose to find it for her; but she saw it before he did, and, seizing it by a rapid movement, she was again at the door, as if she were afraid to linger. She paused there for a second, she cast one last glance at him, and, having lightly pressed her finger-tips to her lips, she was gone.

Carew one more sank back in his chair abstractedly. At last, with a distinctness which startled his own ears, he heard the following few words escape him: 'Marry her! I could as soon imagine myself marrying a fairy or a mermaid!'

By that time the following night she and her mother were at Genoa.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SPELL WORKS.

SEEING that Carew, up to the last moment, could thus let prudence control and criticise impulse, it might be thought that he had been right in his estimate of his own situation, and that his devotion, whatever effect it might have produced upon Miss Capel, was certainly not strong enough to cause any great trouble to himself. And, indeed, until he was actually left alone, this continued to be his own view of the matter ; but from that moment he began to see he was mistaken. He was like a man who has been drinking in a hot room for hours, and thinks he is quite sober till he finds himself in the fresh air. No sooner was his companion of the past week gone from him—no sooner had her carriage disappeared through the outer archway, than a solitude that might be felt took possession of his consciousness, and he began to understand gradually the real results of her company. Instead of passing away from him like a beautiful dream—a dream which was sure soon to return and continue itself, and which during its absence it was a pensive luxury to regret—she had taken half of his waking life away with her.

It was different some ten days back when Miss Consuelo Burton had left him, though he himself, for reasons far down in his mind, felt it a profanity to compare the two occasions. It was different then. Miss Consuelo Burton had some connection with his life, regarded as the life of a man with some high and rational purpose. When she had turned away from him, he felt as if he had been excommunicated. Now he felt merely as if he had been abandoned. He could connect Miss Capel with no purpose of any kind. He could reason about his longing for her as little as he could reason about thirst or hunger. He only felt she was gone and had left a blank behind her. He knew quite well that she had not gone willingly, and that there was also a prospect of her speedy return. But the mere fact of her absence

quickly developed in his mind the same feeling of desertion he would have had if she had fled from him with a rival, and the same feeling of hopelessness he would have had if no return had been in question.

Whilst she was with him, enchanting as he felt her presence, he had never regarded her as any part of his own life. He had escaped, as it were, out of his own life into hers. He never imagined that he could take hers into his. He could form no picture of any practical career with her. Now the case was altogether reversed. He could form no picture of any practical career without her.

Her presence, he felt, would be more to him than gratified ambition, more than any sympathy on political or social matters, more than any successful struggle with the hated tendencies of the day; and to live for her, to guide her, to cherish her, to tend and defend this one single flower, would not indeed be more than duty—it would be duty itself.

During the day of her departure these thoughts and feelings developed rapidly like a fever, and his imagination by the evening was in a state of abnormal activity. Continually in the bright sunshine, and then again in the moonlight, he had looked down at the garden, with all its dells of flowers, thinking of her, in accordance with her own simile, as the glow-worm that had lit up everything with 'its aerial hue'; and before he could bring himself to attempt sleeping he was obliged to seek relief in beginning a passionate letter to her. This as he wrote it was a surprise, a revelation to himself. He was like a man whom a fever has literally taken possession of, and who starts on suddenly seeing his changed face in a glass.

'Everything,' he wrote, 'is blank to me now you are gone. Everything will be blank till you come back again. Shall I ever send these lines to you? I hardly know. I try to think I shall not, because then I shall feel bolder in speaking each thought as it shapes itself. Thoughts!—I am wrong; it is not thoughts that I desire to convey to you: it is simply a longing. And that longing—how shall I

describe it? I cannot. It can be described no more than a perfume. It can be expressed only in a multitude of images, from which it seems to breathe, as the perfume breathes from the petal. As I am writing this the moonlight falls upon my paper, for the curtains are drawn back and my window is wide open. You, and my longing for you, are for my mind associated with that moonlight, and with the garden below me amongst whose odours it falls. Do you think I am talking nonsense? It is nonsense unless you have the key to it. But you, on whom no shade of feeling is ever lost, you, my "glow-worm golden in a dell of dew," perhaps you will understand me. Heart of my heart, life of my life, flesh of my flesh, spirit of my spirit, if I wake to-night I shall think all night of you. If I sleep I shall dream of you.'

This was all he wrote; and the following morning he shrank from re-reading it, much as he might have shrunk from touching some sensitive spot in his body. He did not fear that he had said more than he felt; he feared seeing what he did feel too completely exposed. But a letter arrived for him by the post which sent all such scruples to the winds, and changed his fear that he had said too much into a contemptuous sense that he had said too little. The letter was dated 'Ventimiglia.' He knew the handwriting. She had written to him so soon!

'We have nearly two hours,' Miss Capel began abruptly, 'to wait at this station; so I seize the first opportunity of saying to you what must be said sooner or later. If one jumps out of bed in the morning the very moment one wakes, the act of getting up is easy. If one closes one's eyes again, one may struggle to rouse oneself for hours. The same is the case with the waking dreams of life. Years of trouble may be saved if one breaks away from them the first painful moment one realises they have been only dreams.

'I have been dreaming. I don't know whether you have. Very possibly you have been only pretending to dream: indeed, now that my eyes are open, I can hardly

venture to think it was otherwise. But what does that matter? I was not pretending; and I am writing to you now very seriously to say that I must dream no more. I hope you do not think me rude. I hope I do not pain you. No—I don't think you will mind much; but still this is abrupt and sudden, and you will wonder what is the meaning of it.

'Well, do you remember my last day, and a letter I got from an old school-friend of mine, in the morning? Mamma and I were talking about it. My friend, who is married, is a relation of the Prince de Vaucuse, and she wrote to say that she was going to send me a wedding present—a pair of earrings. That brought the reality of things back to me, though I tried not to think of it; and I might have put it away from me, if my friend had not said also that the Prince had come back to Paris. He has been at Southampton lately, where he keeps his yacht; and, now he was back in Paris, I knew I should at once hear from him. That was why I was so anxious about our letters yesterday when we were going away. I expected one from him; and I felt a kind of shyness in thinking that you might see it. It came. I had hoped—how wrong of me!—I had hoped it might be to say that his yacht was being got ready, and that he was going round the world in her. He meant to have done so; and that made what is going to happen seem so far off to me. And the letter really was to say he is coming to Nice—I think in three weeks; and in May we are to be married.

'It will be difficult for me to forget the days that I have passed with you; perhaps it will be impossible. But I must do my best to forget them, or never to think of them with any kind of tenderness. No, Mr. Carew; there must be no half-measures for me. If I had my own way, I would not even come back to Courbon-Loubet, as mamma and the General propose doing. But it would be very difficult for me to remain away; and I have not the courage, the determination, to face the difficulty. Else I couldn't ever

look at you again—not till I could do so without remembering. Will that time ever come?

‘We shall be at the Hôtel de Gênes. Will you write me a line there? When we meet again everything will be so very different; and a few kind words from you would make things a little easier.’

Then followed the signature. It was simply ‘Violet.’

This letter had a singular effect upon Carew. His fever in reading it passed rapidly into an acuter phase; and the thought that Miss Capel seemed on the point of escaping him did much to ripen a definite wish to seize her. Life if he lost her, he felt, would have no taste in it. He turned to the letter he had himself begun last night. All shyness of his own protestations had left him; and in their strained excited language he now found a futile comfort. He tore the paper up, however, for two reasons. Its language was not strained and not excited enough; and there was also no answer in it to the news he had received this morning. He began writing afresh to her, and in a more vehement way. What he had said before he repeated with added emphasis, and there ran through his phrases what in his first letter was wanting—a note of pain and decision, that gave them a certain *brusquerie*.

‘You speak,’ he wrote in conclusion—‘you speak of your dream ending. Why must you end it? What constraint is put upon you? Consider how young you are, how your whole life is before you. It has seemed to me that that life of yours has just begun to unfold itself, petal by petal, trembling to the light. And now, if you do what you talk of doing, there will be nothing in store for you but blight and darkness. The rose-tree of your life will live, but the rose will be gone. There will be no second blossoming. Have the courage to continue dreaming, and the dream will become the reality. Do you doubt that? Let me tell you one thing. To me what were once realities have become dreams; and the dream which you and I have dreamt together has become the one, the only reality. I will ask

this of you. Decide on nothing till you return here. Let us meet, for a few days at least, as we have met before. Those days may be the earnest of a happy future ; or they will be something—a small something—saved from a dark one.'

It occurred to him after he had sent this letter off that even now he had made no direct and practical proposal to her. There had been much mention of dreams ; and he thought he must have seemed like a lover literally pleading in dreamland—a land where there was no marrying and no marriage settlements. Mere emotion, however, possessed him far too completely to allow much foothold in his mind for critical reflections such as this ; and until an answer came from her he hardly knew what to do with himself. One thing he did know—he could not remain quiet ; and when he entered the study where he had once been so absorbed and industrious, and looked at his shelves of Ricardo, Marx, and Bastiat, they affected his mind with the same sort of repulsion that a man about to be sea-sick feels for a leg of mutton.

At last the letter he had been so longing for came. The beginning of it piqued him by its coldness ; but he saw in a moment or two that the coldness was artificial ; and the ending touched him in a quite unexpected way.

'I had hoped,' she said, 'that in waking up from my dream I should, indeed, have found one part of it a reality. I dared to hope so ; and the part I speak of was your friendship. I had hoped you would help me. I am quite alone in the world. It is very hard to do right. Am I preferring a very presumptuous request when I ask you not to make it harder—as you so easily, so very easily can?'

He had been utterly unprepared for any appeal of this kind. He had pictured her suffering from many an emotional struggle, but never from a moral one. Just as she had seemed a stranger to his political and his social anxieties, so had he conceived of her as a stranger to the conflict

between virtue and wrong-doing. The idea of vice he had never for a moment associated with her ; but he had as little associated with her the idea of virtue. In the singular quality of her ingenuousness she had seemed like Eve before the fruit of the tree of knowledge had been eaten ; and the only standard she had suggested to him hitherto had been that of her refined and easily wounded feelings, and her seeming need of some deep and unfound affection. He recalled her volume of poems that dealt with spiritual subjects, and the lines at the beginning of it that had been addressed to herself ; but all that had seemed to perplex rather than appeal to her. He recalled, too, the incident of her having stolen off to church alone ; but even then she seemed to have acted not so much like a devotee as like a child, or a stray dog looking for some friend.

Now he saw his error, though he could not fully realise it ; and too late his conscience began to smite him, not only for the hasty and false judgment he had formed of her, but for the way in which by her undefended affections he had led her into sorrow and danger.

It's dangerous work to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own—

these lines of Robert Browning's kept on constantly recurring to him ; and the thought expressed in them, with the personal reproach implied in it, mixed in his mind with a feeling for her of contrite pity. He wrote, in answer to her, a subdued and gentle letter, promising to give her whatever help he could.

'It seems hard,' he said, 'that in this case my truest sympathy for you must be shown by suppressing nearly every sign of itself ; and that the help you speak of must consist in holding out no hand to you. But if it must be so it must. The bitterest reproach you could ever bring against me would be, that I had caused you to reproach yourself.'

He thought that in thus writing he was saying farewell to

all his former relations with her ; but in this very act of renouncing his affection that affection deepened. It took a new glow and colour, as suddenly as some cloud does in the sunrise ; and having seized his pen again, he added this postscript : ‘ When you come, I shall ask you a definite question, and you must be prepared to answer it one way or another. Is not some change in your plans possible ? ’

He looked at the words for some moments reflectively ; and at last, acting under a vague combination of motives, he tore up the separate sheet they were written on.

CHAPTER X.

THE BEGINNING OF FEVER.

WHEN two friends, at a distance, quarrel through the medium of correspondence, the estrangement is apt to seem far greater than it really is, or than, if they had met, it would have seemed to be. The same is true of every difference of feeling which takes place under the same circumstances : and when a meeting does take place at last, there is a surprise on either side at the sight of the familiar features, instead of the far-off phantasmal face that had seemed to stare coldly through the letter-paper.

Carew was keenly conscious of this when the Capels came back to the château. Looking at Miss Capel as she sat opposite him at dinner, noting in her eyes exactly the same softness and the same sparkle that seemed to leap with pleasure at the sight of him, he could hardly believe that this was really the person who had been begging, almost ordering, him to keep a chilly distance from her. One thing only reminded him that such was the case ; and this was the way in which she treated a piece of intelligence that was for him exceedingly disappointing. His visitors could not possibly remain more than two nights with him. The day after to-morrow they were obliged to go back to Cannes ; and Miss Capel in a number of ways, imperceptible to any

one but himself, gave him to understand that this plan had her entire approbation. She declared that Cannes was the loveliest place in the world ; that nothing was pleasanter than to drink chocolate, with delicious whipped cream, at a certain confectioner's on the Promenade ; and she asked Carew what he would advise her to wear at a ball which next week would be given at the Cercle Nautique.

After dinner he tried to speak to her alone, as she used to be giving him occasions to do constantly. But she avoided any incident of this kind with a tact so extraordinary that he could hardly tell whether the avoidance were not unintentional. The only sign which convinced him it was not so was a sort of mischievous triumph which he detected once or twice in her eyes. For the rest, her behaviour was superficially quite the same to him ; she talked, laughed, sang, just as she had done. But in spite of this he felt that everything was changed ; and he went to bed with a sense of provocation and bitterness which he could not appease, though he knew it was wholly unjustified.

The following morning he fancied himself more lucky. He had thought she was sitting with her mother in the large saloon, and having gone for a book into a small sitting-room next to it, he was surprised and delighted at finding her there alone. But the moment he approached her she seemed to shrink away from him, something like a bird which, although perfectly tame, betrays a horror of having a hand laid on its feathers. He sat down on a chair close to her, and said, in a forced voice, 'My picture is not finished yet.'

A book lay in her lap. She looked down at it, and began turning over the pages.

'No,' she said, 'that must wait till some other time.'

'It is not finished,' exclaimed Carew, 'but something else is.'

'What else?'

Carew paused for a moment, and then said, almost fiercely, 'What you call a dream, and what I call a reality.'

She appeared to take no notice of this, but merely turned over the pages rather quicker than before ; then, springing from her seat, she said, 'This is the wrong volume ; I must go and fetch the other,' and she moved lightly towards the door of the large saloon.

But Carew was there before her, and, with his hand on the handle, confronted her with a gaze of inquiry.

'Mr. Carew, will you let me go by?' she said. 'Please—please—I am in a hurry.'

And she tried to give to her voice an air of petulant playfulness.

'In one moment,' he said—'in one moment. But first—I may never be alone with you again—first say good-bye to me.'

'Do you want to get rid of us yet?' she said. 'I thought you were going to have kept us as your guests till to-morrow.'

'It is you,' he retorted, 'who are anxious to get rid of me. You have already driven me to the door of your heart. Well, won't you say good-bye to me before the door is slammed?'

He took her hand, which she surrendered to him passively.

'Will you,' he murmured, 'not kiss me once more?'

He leaned towards her, but as he did so she drew back.

'No, Mr. Carew,' she answered, 'never, never again.'

And she looked at him, not with anger exactly, but with a little pout of refusal. She seemed almost as childlike in her resistance to temptation as she had been in her forgetfulness that such a thing as temptation existed.

'Why,' she exclaimed, half teasingly, half sadly—'why do you look so cross? Mr. Carew, will you pick that letter up for me?'

He stooped to do so. In a moment she was half through the door, and, receiving the letter with a parting smile, she disappeared.

‘Mamma,’ she said, an hour or two later, when, having fetched her work, she was seated beside her mother, ‘where is Mr. Carew? We have not seen him for some time.’

‘Didn’t you hear what he told me?’ said Mrs. Capel. ‘You must have been out of the room, then. He has had some business in the neighbourhood which has called him away, and it is very possible that he will not be back till the evening.’

Miss Capel changed colour suddenly. She became first white, then she flushed scarlet.

‘And we,’ she said presently, ‘go early to-morrow!’

Nothing more was seen of Carew for hours. He re-entered the saloon a little after five, and found Mrs. Capel, who had finished her tea, just quitting it.

‘Well,’ he exclaimed, with an air as careless as he could command, ‘I’ve done my business. I’ve had a hard day’s work of it. I have been as far as Beaulieu.’

Mrs. Capel turned back for a moment. She asked if he was not thirsty, and said the tea was still quite warm.

‘I shall be down again in a moment,’ she added. ‘Violet will pour you out a cup. See how I am doing the honours in your own house!’

He had not at first noticed Miss Capel; but there she was, in a low chair by the tea-table. She looked up at him, and the flush came again into her cheeks.

‘You have been at Beaulieu?’ she said.

‘On business—yes,’ he replied coldly, still standing at a distance from her, and making no offer to advance.

‘Come,’ she said, ‘will you not have your tea?’

‘Will you allow me,’ he said in a strained changed voice, ‘to come near you? I hardly know on what I may venture.’

‘Come,’ she repeated, and this time so gently that he moved forward and took a seat close to her. ‘Mr. Carew, how can you talk in that way? Why do you? And so you have been to Beaulieu—and on business? What business?’

‘Shall I tell you?’ said Carew. ‘To avoid any chance

of giving pain to you as you are now, and to live over once more an hour with you as you were then. I rode there. I rode as hard as I could. I put my horse up at the hotel, and I walked on to the promontory—our promontory. Perhaps you have forgotten it.'

'It would be well for me,' she said in a choked tone, 'if I had.'

'And I sat there, on a rock,' he continued, 'looking at our tower, shining in to-day's sunlight just as it did in yesterday's. I couldn't go near it—I hadn't the heart for that. I found—do you know what I found? It was the fragments of one of our wine-bottles, which you had broken against a stone. My life was lying at the foot of that tower, broken into pieces by you, just as you broke that bottle. Whilst I was sitting there I wrote something I want to show you. Will you look at it?'

He held out to her a piece of paper with something in pencil scribbled on it. Whilst she was reading he watched her, his chin resting on his hand. What she deciphered was this. It was headed 'The Tower at Beaulieu'; and then came what follows :—

*One true hour of love lies there,
Dead in the clear unburying air.
Hear distracted Memory call,
'Who shall give it burial?'*
*Memory! thou of little wit,
There be three shall bury it.
Let the World, false, vain, and loud,
Be the grave-clothes and the shroud ;
Let the Devil's Scorn of Good
Be the heavy coffin-wood ;
And let False Love be the clay
That hides all from the light of day.*

She was a long time bending over the paper. She must have read the lines several times, and once or twice he saw that she bit her lip. At last she raised her eyes, and two large tears fell from them. She held her hand out to him ;

he took it ; she pressed his convulsively, and then abruptly dropped it.

‘You mustn’t,’ she murmured, ‘be angry with me. You must be always my friend. By-and-by I shall want friends more than ever. Listen!’ she exclaimed, starting slightly, and making a strong effort to recover her natural manner, ‘I hear Mamma coming. She is gone into the next room—yes, I know why. She has gone to see if I have left any of my goods about. Let us go to her. Do be civil to her. Don’t let her imagine you are thinking of other things. Did you hear what I just said? What will your opinion of the Capel family be? Mamma does the honours of your own house to you, and I give you lessons in how to do the honours yourself.’

Whilst she was speaking she had risen, and a smile had at length come back to her. She was looking down at him, motioning him to rise also ; and in that downward smile there seemed to him to be something compassionate, as if, despite all that was childlike in her, she knew more of life than he did. He rose. As he did so her smile grew tenderer, and, putting her hand on his shoulder, she quickly and softly kissed him. But how different was the touch of her lips now to what it had been on the tower! It was nothing now but a sign of pity and concession. It was he who was like a child now—a poor refractory child—and her kiss was like a sugar-plum given to him at last furtively and under protest. This was his last private interview with her before she left the château.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FEVER CONQUERS.

WHEN the Capels departed, the following morning, both the General and his wife said many civil things about their hopes that Carew would come often to Cannes and see them. Miss

Capel also murmured something to the same effect, but she did so mechanically, putting little or no meaning into it. She was leaving him thus! He could hardly bear the thought. He determined that he would not wait long before he came to some better understanding with her, and, just as the carriage was beginning to move off, he called after it to her, 'I shall be at Cannes the day after to-morrow.' She looked round, waved her hand to him, and he could just catch the words, 'Certainly; we shall expect you.'

During the last few days his mind had been so much occupied that he had allowed an accumulation of business letters to remain unanswered, some of them even unopened. He resolved now to kill the day in attending to them. When, however, he was sitting down at his writing-table, the first thing that caught his eye was a little three-cornered note placed conspicuously upon his blotting-book. It was from Miss Capel. It ran thus:—

'I am writing good-bye to you, for I do not know how to say it. I am afraid you must think me a very odd person. This is partly due to circumstances which I cannot explain, and partly to another cause, which I could explain if it would not make you angry. You do not now think enough of the position in which I stand. If you did you would see that I am not different, but that I am obliged to seem different—and not only now, but for always. Would you wish it to be otherwise? I thought you were going to help me, and not make things harder for me. I have heard again from *him*. He is coming to Cannes a fortnight hence, perhaps, and then everything may happen much sooner than was at first intended. It all seems so strange, I can hardly realise it. We shall see you again soon. I shall like that. Like it! You see the language I am obliged to use to you. It is like withered roses.

'When you meet me I must leave it to you to settle with your own conscience how you will behave to me. Good-bye. God bless you. I hardly know what I am writing. There

are some feelings, Mr. Carew, which we must bury, even though they may not be dead.'

Carew's business letters at once went out of his head. Having read Miss Capel's note several times over, he slowly took from a drawer some crumpled sheets of paper, scribbled with pencil jottings; and spreading these before him pressed his head on his hands and began poring over them. By-and-by he began writing, not continuously, but at irregular intervals. After his luncheon he took a short walk, and then returned again to this same occupation. What its nature was will be seen from the following letter, which he enclosed that night in an envelope directed to Miss Capel.

'You tell me to consult my conscience as to how I ought to meet you again. I have consulted my conscience, and I hardly know what it says. You think your position must be clear to me. I answer you it is not so. You are engaged to marry a man you do not care for, and with whom you do not sympathise. You do sympathise with me. Why must this marriage take place? Surely you are a free agent. There is no constraint put upon you.

'Put me for one moment out of your head entirely, and think of me as pleading not for my sake but for your own. It is better, far better, not to marry at all than to marry as you propose to do. Be wise in time. It will be too late soon. I can think of no fate more terrible, more ruinous, for you than to be tied to a man who is wholly unable to sympathise with you: and you know as well as I do that such is the man in question.

'But, Violet, my own Violet, let me suppose the worst. Let me suppose that a promise binds you, which, for some reason unknown to me, you must fulfil at all costs. I will suppose it does. Well—what then? I have still one prayer to make to you. When the time comes you will marry him—you will redeem your promise—you will be true to it on the reckoning day. But what meanwhile? Listen.

'Just as a promise will claim you then, meanwhile an

affection claims you. Need you be in such haste to show yourself false to *it*—to it which claims, and can claim you for such a little while longer? If for that little while you continue to be to me all you have been, we shall be but seeing our last of what we both realise we must part with. It would be very different if we renewed our friendship afterwards. We should then be plunging into danger, not saying good-bye to happiness. Violet, for your sake I would never allow that.

‘I fear myself to speak of that time ; I hardly dare look forward to it. How could I ever endure to see you pass me in the street, under those altered circumstances? Could I endure to see that face that has been so often near mine, far—far away from me?—those lips that have so often kissed me, open to me only in some chilly commonplace, or with a cordiality far colder than coldness? Violet, everything here recalls you to me—the gardens, the ramparts, the little chair you oftenest sat in, and every distant mountain whose shadows we have watched changing : but most of all Beaulieu, and the old tower there. All that afternoon which I spent there by myself, when you drove me away, words, expressions, thoughts, came thronging into my brain and clustering into—I won’t call it poetry—but metrical expression. I had not to hunt for rhymes and phrases, but merely to choose from the crowd that swarmed round me, soliciting me like beggars : and they had all to do with you. To-day I have been trying to make them intelligible, thinking I would send them to you. Then I thought they would strike you as unreal and artificial ; and I began this common letter to you instead. But they are not artificial. They may be bad poetry ; but, Violet—what name shall I call you that will express my longing for you?—they show what I mean, what I am, far better than this prose does. I didn’t call them, they came to me. Remember this as you read them. You will see that all you urge in that little note of yours filled my mind yesterday as I wandered alone at Beaulieu.’

Which is the better, which the kinder part —
 To leave you quite, to cast you quite aside,
 And in one cold farewell to hide with art
 The pain and passion nature will not hide ;
 Or, still to hold and fold you to my heart,
 And, in a vain dream, dream you still my bride,
 Not ever call one loving word the last,
 Until the past become indeed the past ?

This is the question which, the whole blank day,
 I ask my heart as I sit here alone,
 Watching the dull waves break in Beaulieu bay ;
 And answer from my heart receive I none.
 What makes it mute ? you ask. I will not play
 With hackneyed phrases. Oh, my own, my own,
 There is no need to say my heart is breaking ;
 Pain makes it mute, although 'tis only aching.

Pain in my heart, and silence in my ears,
 Gloom in my eyes—my eyes and ears that miss
 Your eyes and voice, and vague regrets and fears
 Clouding my thoughts—my life is come to this :
 With one keen sense through all, that all my years
 Have closed this meaning in your hopeless kiss.
 Ah ! once again, before the moment slips,
 Love, let me leave my life upon your lips.

What ! do you chide me for that desperate cry,
 And say I tempt you ? Yes, I feel you do.
 Listen to me, then ; I have this reply :
 Let Love, my loved one, judge 'twixt me and you.
 Inquire of Love, who still stands lingering by,
 And gives us still his licence to be true,
 And will not wholly leave us, till betwixt
 My life and yours there is the great gulf fixed.

Ask Him, for He has made you one with me :
 You are with me, and around me everywhere.
 I feel you in the mountains and the sea,
 And when I breathe you feed me in the air.
 And oh, my soul's true soul, the thought of thee
 Moves me to pray, and mixes with my prayer.
 Ask Him, for still - He still can point to-day
 Towards Heaven, and say, 'In me behold the way.'

Ask Him to-day. He will have said 'Farewell,'
Farewell to you, farewell to me—to-morrow :
And where He dwelt another Love will dwell,
With haggard, pitying eyes, and lips that borrow
Their hopeless sentence from the gates of Hell,
'Through me the way is to the eternal sorrow' ;
And lure and warn us in the same low breath—
'Take life from me, but know my life is death.'

'Remember what I have said. When your fate is settled, I will never allow myself to see you again. I will not run the risk of guiding you to the eternal sorrow. Now, and now only, is the accepted time. You may be to me as you have been for a few days longer : you may, if you will, be everything to me, for all your life. But you know the condition. It is that you free yourself from your present engagement.'

Carew's business letters received no attention that day. The following morning he had a note from Mrs. Capel, saying, 'Come to us to-morrow as early as you can. We propose to give *you* a little picnic in return for the one you gave us ; and we think of going to a place amongst the Esterel mountains, not far from Théoule. Be with us, if you can, by twelve.'

This arrangement delighted him, and he at once wrote to acquiesce in it. Then, in somewhat better heart, he addressed himself to the pile of documents which he had too long neglected, and he soon found one of them to be of quite unexpected interest.

Its perusal produced one instant effect. He hastily tore up the letter which he had written to Mrs. Capel, and substituted another for it in which, while accepting the invitation, he said he should be unable to meet them at Cannes. He would, instead, go to Théoule by train, and wait for them there at the railway station, which they would naturally pass in driving.

CHAPTER XII.

A CRISIS.

‘THERE he is ! I can see him through the railings !’ This was Miss Capel’s exclamation. Her eyes were quicker than her parents. ‘He is on the platform, standing by an enormous pile of luggage. Who with so much luggage can have possibly got out at Théoule, I wonder ?’

The Capels’ carriage drew up at the little wayside station ; and Carew, after a few moments’ conversation with one of the officials, came out through the wicket, and they were presently proceeding on their journey.

He now had time to look at the girl’s face. He at once noticed that the tint in her cheeks had faded. The light still gleamed in her eyes, but it was not so buoyant as usual, and, for the first time during his whole acquaintance with her, her childlike and fearless frankness had given place to a certain timidity. As, however, she watched Carew’s behaviour, her old manner, little by little, returned to her. She had anticipated that his attention or his reproachful silence might embarrass her, but she was surprised and relieved at finding that nothing of this kind happened ; and that, instead, he appeared to be distracted by some quite alien subject. She was relieved, but she was slightly piqued ; and, under the influence of the latter feeling, she began to attack him with a little volley of questions. Why had he not joined them at Cannes and driven with them ? What had he done with himself since they left ? What was he talking about so confidentially to the man at the station ? Who had got out of the train with that imposing pile of luggage ? To the last question alone did she get any definite answer.

‘The luggage,’ Carew said, ‘is mine.’

Her cheeks flushed with pleasure ; and yet from her eyes there came a moment’s glance of reproach.

‘What !’ she exclaimed, ‘and are you really coming to stay at Cannes for a little ?’

‘At Cannes?’ he repeated. ‘No. I am on my way back to England.’

Mrs. Capel and the General were loud in their expressions of regret ; but Miss Capel did not utter a word.

‘Family matters,’ said Carew, ‘have recalled me suddenly. Before long I hope to be back in the South again ; though circumstances,’ and here he looked towards Miss Capel, ‘may be such as to make me exchange Courbon-Loubet for Italy. Our picnic the other day ended with our seeing off the General to Genoa. To-day you must return the compliment, and see me off from Théoule station to London.’

The picnic was pleasant and uneventful enough, having nothing special to mark it, excepting the beauty of the scene—an open spot in the folds of a pine-clad valley. Carew and Miss Capel both did their best to exhibit the signs of an ordinary cheerful friendship, and hopes were expressed both by him and all the others that, in the course of a fortnight or so, he would be once more among them. As soon, however, as the last biscuit had been eaten, and the inevitable cigar-case was emerging from the General’s pocket, Miss Capel said, with a soft, imperious laugh, ‘I’m not going to let Mr. Carew stop smoking here with papa. I’m going to take him with me for one last walk along the valley. You know the path, mamma. It is the way we went last year.’ Miss Capel was evidently accustomed to have her way in everything—at all events in matters of this description ; and she and Carew were soon going together through a narrow forest path, with brushwood on each side of them. For some time they said very little, and what they did say was mere constrained trivialities. At last, after a pause of unusual length, Miss Capel began thus :—

‘And so, Mr. Carew, you are really going away, are you?’

‘I am,’ said Carew drily.

‘And this time to-morrow,’ she went on, ‘you will be—how far away?—a thousand miles, at least.’

‘You,’ said Carew, ‘are going farther away from me than I voluntarily should ever go from you. You can come to England—the place to which I am going; but you are going to a place to which I can never follow you.’

‘Why not?’ she said. ‘You may be my friend still. So far as our friendship goes there need be no difference.’

‘You are talking nonsense!’ he retorted angrily. ‘So far as our friendship goes, there must be every difference. If you wish,’ he went on presently, ‘that I should put the matter in plain words to you, I will do so. I love you far too well to see you only as a friend; and under the circumstances, which you are deliberately choosing for yourself, I love you far too well to dream of your being more than a friend. So there is nothing left us, you see, but to say a long good-bye; and if possible to think no more about it.’

‘Exactly,’ she said, ‘that is just what you will do, Mr. Carew. I know you better than you know yourself. I do not say you will think no more about it, but you will certainly think very little. You will think a little;—yes, I believe you will do that.’ Carew was about to open his lips in protest. ‘No,’ she said, ‘don’t look hurt or angry. You think you are fond of me. You think I am necessary to your happiness. But what charms you is not me. It is the echoes in your heart which I have chanced to awaken—the echoes which go on wandering from dell to dell, and the birds there I have awaked also. It is all in yourself. There is very little music in me. I don’t complain. I am simply telling you what is. Very soon you will have no regret for me. I shall be a pleasant memory you will not shrink from looking back upon. As for me, I shall wish that I had never met you.’

‘You are wrong,’ he said. ‘Why should you think that?’ But he spoke in a voice which hardly asked for an answer.

At the same moment the path took a turn which brought them, on a sudden, in full view of the sea. She seemed glad of an excuse to change the subject.

‘There,’ she said ‘is the view I wished to show you.’

He too seemed equally glad to escape to any triviality, even to the fact of his being, as she spoke, caught in a dangling bramble.

‘Look,’ he said, ‘you have landed me in the thorns of life already. I am caught completely, and all owing to the path by which you have taken me.’

‘It is hitched in your coat,’ she said, ‘just behind your collar. Let me pull it off for you.’

She stepped up on the bank at one side of the path, and she thus stood looking down on him from a vantage-ground of a few inches. She seized both ends of the bramble and began to free it from him; but suddenly her purpose changed: she gently drew it round him, more closely than before, and watched him as she held him there bound in this mimic fetter. At last she said:—

‘I have possession of you now. I don’t think that I shall ever let you go again.’

‘Don’t,’ he said gravely. ‘Keep me—keep me always. It is what I ask you to do.’

‘Tell me,’ she said: ‘shall I come with you this afternoon to England? I won’t let you go till you tell me that.’

But Carew made no immediate answer. They both spoke as if they were tantalising themselves with ideas rather than proposing possibilities. At last Carew said, in a constrained and painful voice:—

‘I have no home in England to which I could take you—at all events I do not know if I have. Many things have happened since last I saw you; or, rather, I should say, I have learnt many things. My future is in my own hands no more than yours is—perhaps not so much.’

‘Mine,’ she said absently, ‘is not in my own hands at all.’ And then, as if her thoughts were straying still farther, she began to murmur something to herself in an indistinct monotone.

‘What are you saying?’ he asked her.

She stopped, and looked at him with a faint momentary smile. ‘Something,’ she said, ‘that I was reading over

yesterday—verses, Mr. Carew, verses. I found them in a collection of Dramatic Lyrics, arranged and selected by the author, Mr. Robert Browning.’

‘Tell me them,’ said Carew. ‘What were they?’

She seemed to hesitate between seriousness and a forced air of mockery. In a moment or two she was serious; and in a tone something like that of a child learning to recite a prayer—except that in this case there was deep emotion veiled by it—she began to recite, gravely fixing her eyes on him:—

‘It all comes to the same thing in the end,
Since mine thou art, mine wast, and mine shalt be,
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum,
Or lavish of thy treasure, thou must come
Back to the heart’s place which I keep for thee.’

As she finished, by an impulse that seemed instinctive, she began to extend her arms, as if inviting him to come to her; and at last she murmured almost below her breath:—

‘Say good-bye to me!’

But the moment he moved a step nearer to her, her purpose abruptly changed; and lightly descending from the bank on which she was still standing, she began to walk at a rapid pace back towards the scene of the picnic. Carew followed her with a sense of complete bewilderment, which was not lessened by the fact that when she looked behind her for an instant she seemed to be once more smiling. He called to her to stop; he asked her where she was going; then he quickened his pace. No sooner, however, did she find him coming up to her than she suddenly took to running, saying, in a voice that suggested laughter and tears equally:—

‘Run, Mr. Carew, run! Can’t you see I am racing you.’

To this invitation he made no response. On the contrary, he began to walk more slowly again, and watched her glancing figure as it sped away from him. When, however, she was about a hundred yards ahead of him she stopped short, and turned round, waiting for him.

‘Come, Mr. Carew,’ she exclaimed, as soon as he was within speaking distance; ‘here are Mamma and the General. They have been making tea for you, and you are to have some before you begin your journey.’

And a moment afterwards the two elders appeared.

‘It’s a cruel kindness,’ said the General, ‘not to speed the parting guest, if he must part, however sorry we may be to lose him. But from what you say about your train, you have not too much time, if we intend to do things comfortably.’

They returned together to the spot where they had had their luncheon. They drank their tea; and in spite of efforts at gaiety, there were signs of sadness apparent in all the party. Still more was this the case when they again entered the carriage, and the horses’ heads were directed towards the station.

‘When do you get to Paris?’ ‘When do you get to Calais?’ ‘So far as we can judge, you will have an excellent passage’—such were the remarks and questions which, with the inevitable answers, did duty for conversation during Carew’s last twenty minutes with his friends; and even this was kept up with difficulty, for, towards the end, Miss Capel became wholly silent; nor did she even raise her eyes till Carew had actually descended, and then he saw that they were tremulous with tears, which, as all her face showed, she was struggling not to shed.

Ten minutes later he was leaning back in the railway carriage, partly occupied with the perplexities of his immediate future, partly with the scenes that were drifting away behind him.

And it was thus they had said good-bye, so he bitterly told himself, with no explanation either on the one side or the other. Then he thought of the cause that was taking him back to England, and exclaimed wearily, ‘I was right. It was best that I did not speak.’

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

A RETURN FROM DREAMLAND.

CAREW was heir to estates in the West of England, a part of which at least had been in his family since the Conquest. There had been hardly a reign in which one of his name or more had not figured somehow in the stirring history of the county—from the days of fighting to the days of borough-mongering: and Otterton Hall, which would one day be his home, was the oldest and most remarkable country house of the district.

In addition to these prospects he was in present possession of an income which, for a bachelor, was, to say the least of it, ample. He was able without extravagance to entertain as he had done at the château.

Still, his position was not one of independence. His father, who had been dead for many years, was the second of three brothers; and on his mother, who was still living, had been settled for life nearly all that his father left—a moderate competence. His two uncles, who were still living also, were both of them very old men; and to the estates of the eldest Carew's succession was assured. These estates, however, were much encumbered. The fact was so notorious that many would-be country gentlemen were counting on the day when they would have the chance of bidding for them; and it was at all events hardly open to doubt that unless Carew had considerable means besides, he would never be able to hold his own at the Hall. But his younger uncle, Mr. Horace Carew—a successful dandy

of the palmiest days of dandyism, had married a great heiress, who had died leaving no children; and all her fortune, which was quite at his own disposal, he let it be understood was designed for Carew, his nephew. But this was not all. He had not been content with promises. He had practically charged himself with Carew's entire education. He had first sent him to Eton, and then to Oxford; and had since made him an allowance of fifteen hundred a year.

Carew's whole prospects thus hung on this uncle's favour—not merely his prospects of wealth and luxury, but the prospect, far nearer his heart, of restoring the fortunes of his family, and indeed of retaining his old family home.

As for luxury, he was as careless of that as most men; and in his present position he could have made himself quite happy on half or even a third of the income he actually enjoyed. But considering himself in the light of the prospective head of his family, he regarded wealth in a very different spirit. It became in his eye a something which naturally ought to belong to him. It was as much in the fitness of things that he should be surrounded by servants, and eat his dinner off plate, as it was that every man should be possessed of a suit of clothes. Such pomp and circumstance was for him a sign merely; and beyond securing him this, the possession of wealth meant to him the saving an institution with which his whole life was connected as closely as any Hamadryad was ever connected with her oak-tree. That institution was his own family; and the preservation and restoration of it was as much an act of piety, to him, as the embellishment and care of an altar might be to a congregation of the faithful. Nor was this feeling on his part mere personal vanity or selfishness. Indeed, when comparing his own family with others, he was extremely modest and sober in his estimate of its comparative importance. He respected it mainly for the sake of the great social principle, of which it was but one amongst many more prominent representatives; and his

own prejudices and principles had become more and more stringent, in proportion as those of such other representatives seemed to him to be growing more lax and lukewarm.

This being the case, it is easy to conjecture the feelings with which he received at the château the following information from his lawyer—an old man who was not his lawyer only, but a family friend as well. The letter, indeed, which conveyed it, though enclosed in a blue envelope, was friendly and not official. It began by reminding Carew how the younger of his two uncles had expressed strong wishes as to his making a suitable marriage; and how twice, on conceiving that these wishes might be thwarted, he had shown symptoms of no doubtful anger.

‘I quite feel,’ the letter went on, ‘how difficult and delicate a subject this is to touch upon, but, since I must touch upon it, it is best to speak quite plainly. Your uncle, Mr. Horace, as, of course, you are aware, has the whole of his fortune entirely under his own control, and you can hardly be in doubt as to the result threatened, in case you should contract an alliance which would seriously offend him.

‘Well, Mr. Carew, you will forgive my recalling to you how alarmed he was some eighteen months ago by some gossip—some foolish gossip—which reached his ears, connecting your name with that of the Countess de Saint Valery. One can easily understand and excuse an old man’s anxieties, looking at the world from the distance of infirmity and seclusion; and he was, as you know, much disturbed by the idea that just at the time when you should be thinking of marriage, you were making your marriage impossible by an entanglement with a married woman—or a woman who, if divorced, would be even more distasteful to him.

‘Madame de Saint Valery’s subsequent adventures set his mind at rest. He became quite persuaded that your relations with her were not what he had supposed they were. Sometimes, however, it happens that an idea which

seems to be dead is really only sleeping, and, I am sorry to say, such has been the case here. Madame de Saint Valery has been at Nice lately, so your uncle hears. He hears, also, that your old intimacy with her has been resumed, and that you have—— It is needless, however, to repeat details. It will be enough to tell you the result. He is persuaded—he has got it into his head, and nothing will get it out—that, since this lady is certainly divorced now, there is a danger—a probability—of your wishing to marry her. On what grounds he bases this fear, who have been his informants, and what they have informed him of, I cannot pretend to say; nor does it concern us now, especially as, you will allow me to add, I disbelieve the entire story. All I have to tell you is this. Your uncle talked over the whole matter with me. No one, as you know, is more obstinate than he is; but no one, though he may do a disagreeable thing, more dislikes saying a disagreeable word. He is therefore determined, come what may, to have no personal dispute with yourself; and he has accordingly requested me, as a friend, not as a lawyer, to convey to you a determination he has arrived at. He hopes that the knowledge of it may influence your future conduct.

‘He is going to make an important alteration in his will. I need not now trouble you with the legal details of it; but its practical effect, so far as regards yourself, will be as follows: his fortune, to which he still wishes you to succeed, is, with the exception of one thousand a year, to cease to be yours in the event of your marrying an alien.

‘I have now discharged my mission.

‘I need only add that, so far as the Countess de Saint Valery is concerned, I do not for a moment believe that this arrangement can have any concern for you; but there are circumstances which may very probably arise, under which you might find yourself seriously hampered by its consequences. For every reason, therefore, it is quite right that you should know of it; and if you should be able to

set Mr. Horace's mind at rest, by writing yourself to him and contradicting the reports about you, you would be doing not only a kind, but also a prudent action.

'He is in very feeble health ; and his extreme anxiety to have this alteration in his will effected without delay, makes me suspect that, though his doctors speak smooth things to him, he thinks his condition far less certain than they do.'

Carew's first emotion on reading this letter was simply one of bewilderment. As to his uncle's displeasure with him on account of Madame de Saint Valery—of that, it is true, he retained the liveliest recollection. It was the only occasion, during the whole of his life, on which that uncle had addressed him otherwise than with complacency. He recollected the old man's looks, and the very words employed by him. They were these :—

'There has been a folly of this kind in the family once before. One of your grandfather's brothers, as you know, ran off with one of these d—d women—monstrous pretty she was, too, so I am told—shot the husband in a duel, and by-and-by married her. He was the eldest son, but, fortunately, it was possible to disinherit him. Now mind this—don't let me hear that you are up to any tricks of that kind. I'm not giving you a sermon on morals—I leave morals to the parson. I speak to you as a man of the world, and as a relation who has some right to speak to you. And in these capacities I say two things to you—two things, mind : Don't be a fool, and don't disgrace your family. I may add, as a friend, don't ruin your prospects and make yourself miserable for life. Remember what I have said ; and now we'll change the subject.'

Carew did remember. The event was too odd for him to have forgotten it ; but not only had the elopement of Madame de Saint Valery opened—at least he imagined so—his uncle's eyes to the truth, and cured him for ever of his suspicions, but Lord Stonehouse, who knew the whole facts of the case, had shown him in the clearest way that

there had never been good cause for them. Thus Carew's present astonishment, though the whole communication astonished him, was not due to the nature of his uncle's suspicion, but to the sudden and inexplicable revival of it.

Presently, however, a light began to dawn on him. Mrs. Harley's letter came back to his mind ; and he recollected that, in connection with Miss Consuelo Burton's departure, she had mentioned Mr. Inigo as being somehow concerned in the mischief. He now began to put two and two together. Mr. Inigo had caught him on the Promenade des Anglais by moonlight, engaged in a manner that was, without doubt, equivocal ; and Carew, with impatient and indignant anger, jumped at the conclusion that the Miss Burtons and his uncle alike had been prejudiced against him by the gossip of this blundering tattler. In his uncle's case this seemed specially probable, as Mr. Inigo was one of his most industrious parasites. The only question was, What could have been the man's motive? For, crediting Mr. Inigo with all the ambitious stupidity which the largest Christian charity could possibly claim as a shield for him, it was difficult not to believe, in the present case, that his sedulous misrepresentations must have had in them an element of malice.

Anger and speculation, however, of this kind soon gave way to thoughts that were far more practical. It flashed on him suddenly that, so far as he understood her parentage, Miss Capel was an alien quite as much as her cousin ; and the threatened alteration in his uncle's will, if it ruined his prospects in the event of his marrying the one, would be equally fatal in the event of his marrying the other. Miss Capel, it is true, had spoken of herself as an heiress ; but with regard to money matters she knew little more than a child ; and he had learnt accidentally, from something said by her mother, that the utmost she would inherit from the General would be some six hundred a year.

He rapidly realised the situation. Either he must persuade his uncle that his fears were groundless, and that the

proposed alteration in his will was a needless and unfair precaution ; or else, for his own part, the matter resolved itself into this : he must choose between Miss Capel (if he could win her) on the one hand, and his hopes of restoring his family, indeed of saving it from ruin, on the other.

In his then mood of mind he could bring himself to renounce neither ; and without tormenting himself prematurely by placing these two in the balance, it at once occurred to him that, if he saw his uncle immediately, he might secure an arrangement by which neither would be shut out from him. His action was prompt. It is true that his lawyer's letter had been unopened for two days ; but from the moment of his reading it not a single hour had elapsed before he was making preparations for an immediate return to England.

Such, then, were the circumstances of his journey ; and it will now be sufficiently apparent what were the thoughts by which his mind was distracted—the problems that lay before him, and the memories that lay behind him, as the clanking train on its long journey northwards was hurrying him away from the land of flowers and sunshine. He crossed from Calais at night ; a raw coldness was in the air, and all his future was somehow expressed to his imagination in the bleared lights of Dover revealing themselves through the drizzling mist.

CHAPTER II.

REALITIES REAPPEARING.

A FEW hours later he woke up from a sleep born rather of dejection than of fatigue, in which he had wandered back to the green pine forests of the Esterels, and had almost arrested the retreating figure of Miss Capel. He brushed away the moisture that was darkening the windows of the

railway carriage ; with heavy eyes he peered out into the dimness ; and there, sweeping past him, were the squalid bricks of London, mildewed with morning frost.

A few minutes more, and he was in the echoing gloom of the terminus. A familiar vision of milk-cans, of four-wheeled cabs, groups of shivering porters, and the placards of last night's papers, slowly moved before him, and at last came to a standstill. Then he recognised his servant waiting for him ; and he was presently on his way to his own chambers in Curzon Street.

The unchanged aspect of London, as it stared at him through the wintry morning, struck sadly and strangely on him. His life during his absence abroad had seemed full of hope and suggestion ; and now he felt as if all had gone for nothing, and he had drifted back to the point from which he had started. He could almost believe that the puddles at the gates of the station were the same that his cab had splashed in on the day of his leaving England. Only one thing struck him as new in any way ; and even this made nothing but a very faint impression on him. It was the recurrence on the newspaper placards of words in large type, such as 'Riots,' 'Outrages,' and 'Renewed Alarms,' which he concluded must have reference to affairs in Ireland, or perhaps in Paris. But he gave the matter very little attention ; and presently, in a mood of tired disconsolate apathy, he was ascending the stairs that led to his own rooms.

The cloth was laid for breakfast, a bright fire was burning, and a smell arose from somewhere suggestive of chops and coffee ; but in spite of these signs of welcome everything looked dismal. There was none of that little daily litter which links us with our surroundings, and makes them seem to sympathise with us. There was nothing to connect the scene with his present self, except two objects—one a copy of that morning's *Times* ; the other, a solitary letter lying between his knife and fork. It was a letter from his lawyer, whom he had informed of his movements by tele-

graph ; and the moment he read it, his plans were again changed.

His uncle's house was in Berkeley Square ; and it had been his intention, as soon as the hour would permit of it, to report himself at once to the relation on whose action so much depended. Carew was a man who, if people thought him wrong, was generally too proud or too indolent to care to put himself in the right ; and when first his relations with Madame de Saint Valery had been misunderstood, he had let the world, and his uncle too, make what they could or what they would out of the matter. But now he had resolved that in his uncle's mind, at least, no shadow of suspicion should be left resting on him. In approaching the subject at all he would have to use much diplomacy ; and still more in proceeding to the restrictions that it was threatened would be placed upon his marriage. He knew all this. It would be an affair not of delicacy only, but of time. He had resolved accordingly to lose no moment in beginning.

His lawyer's letter, however, which was but a few lines, informed him that the new will, containing the obnoxious provision, had been actually made ready, though it was probably not yet signed ; and then followed the news that his uncle, who had been suffering much from the fogs, had left London yesterday, and was now with the Squire at Otterton.

Carew and both his uncles had always been on excellent terms ; nor, so far as his personal reception was concerned, was the present unpleasantness at all likely to interrupt them. As for the Squire, he had been an invalid for years, and had never gone farther than the study next his bedroom, or worn any more ceremonious garment than a red velvet dressing-gown. His near relations were his continual guests, and one at a time he would occasionally give them an audience. Often, however, they might be in the house for weeks, and though he would send them a succession of civil messages, they would never receive a single summons

to the presence chamber. It thus happened that Carew saw him but seldom ; and when he did see him the interviews were but brief. But at Otterton he was always welcome ; rooms were always kept for him there, and he was free to come and go as if it were his own home.

His plans now were accordingly made with promptness. He arranged to go to Otterton himself, that night. He would reach it by midnight, if he left London at five.

By-and-by, after he had had a bath and had breakfasted, and tried in vain to sleep a headache off in a chair, he walked round to Berkeley Square, to hear more detailed news about Mr. Horace. As he stood waiting for the bell to be answered, other thoughts rose in him than those connected with the invalid ; and almost for the first time since the beginning of his journey, he began to realise why that journey had been undertaken. His actions, hitherto, had resembled those of a somnambulist, except that the waking with him was a gradual process.

The house, which was designed in a sedate, quasi-classical style, and dated from the middle of the last century, had never been altered since, and looked as if it had never been cleaned. The corroded iron of its railings and its torch-extinguishers, the darkness that lay like a bloom on its chiselled stone-work, made its façade seem to Carew like a magic mirror, which showed the square alive with chariots and running footmen, followed presently by the dandies and the statesmen of the Regency—all the signs of that old aristocratic life, when Mayfair was the stately centre of England. It was a house that had been built by his great-grandfather ; but forty years ago the Squire had been obliged to sell it, and it was only saved from passing out of the family by its present possessor buying it, when he providentially married his heiress.

Carew, as he looked at it, felt his old sense reawakening in him, that he was connected, as if by fibres which were part of his own being, not only with the people and things which affected him personally, but with an entire social and

an entire political order. He experienced what may be described as a certain expansion of his consciousness, and a half-formed comparison flickered across his mind between the claims of his own position and the value of a girl's blue eyes.

Presently the door was opened by an old housekeeper, whose face lit up with delight the moment she saw Carew. But directly after, it settled itself into a querulous gravity. She informed him that her master was really in a very critical condition ; and that bad as London was no doubt for him, the journey on which he had ventured was, in her opinion, worse.

Carew turned away with a gathering anxiety in his mind, and, completely absorbed in his own thoughts, walked slowly down to one of his clubs, which was in St. James's Street. He had not yet looked at a newspaper. The *Times* in his own room he had impatiently pushed aside ; and he meant now to make up for his negligence. But when, sitting down, he seized on a *Morning Post*, he found he could get no farther than the Births and Marriages. The effects of his journey, combining with his mental depression, rapidly began to tell on him. His eyelids felt heavy ; the paper dropped from his hand ; the bars of the window seemed to flicker before him ; and leaning back he fell into an untimely doze.

He slept lightly, however, and a sound before long roused him, though he was far too listless to open his aching eyes. He gradually realised what the sound was. It was the sound of a man's voice, who, to judge by his utterances, was evidently talking for the benefit of the room at large.

'Of course,' he was saying, 'this sort of thing is intolerable. Did you hear what happened?—they pulled Lady Harriet out of her carriage ; and by their insults they caused such a shock to her nerves, that she actually had to get her sister to receive for her at her fancy ball. I wonder you weren't there. You oughtn't to have missed it.'

‘No,’ said a second voice, ‘I was out of town—I was at Lord Bayswater’s.’

‘Lord who?’ said the first voice. ‘Why don’t you call him Robertson? I,’ it continued, with a magnificent haughty weariness, ‘can’t really keep pace with all of these new peers.’

Carew felt a smile spreading itself over his lazy lips. Without looking, he had recognised Mr. Inigo. But his smile, though one of amusement, was by no means one of complacency; and, could he have done so unnoticed, he would have walked out of the room. Unable to do that, he lay back still in his chair. He hoped, being in a shady corner, that he might escape Mr. Inigo’s observation, and he was doing his best to fall asleep again, when there fell on his ears what he thought was the name of Madame de Saint Valery. Mr. Inigo was by this time speaking in an important undertone; and Carew, unwilling to play the part of an eavesdropper, opened his eyes, and was about to make himself visible. At this moment, however, one of Mr. Inigo’s friends exclaimed with a loud laugh, ‘Get away with you, Inigo: you’ve been after her yourself, you old sinner!’ Carew would not for worlds have missed what he then saw. Mr. Inigo made several playful gestures, indicative of a juvenile desire to decapitate his friend with a cane; and then with a delighted knowingness he leered at him through his glasses. A second later he started so that his glasses fell from his nose. He had suddenly seen Carew. Had Carew been a ghost, the effect could not have been greater. Mr. Inigo looked for a moment as if he would like to make his escape; but, recovering his self-possession with a superhuman effort, he slowly turned on the apparition the tails of his frock-coat; and thrusting his hands into his trousers pockets, he stared at the street from the middle of a bay-window. Carew’s eyelids gradually dropped again; and he fell into a sleep this time so sound, that when he awoke from it, it was his first and most natural impulse to stare about, and discover what had disturbed him.

There was a movement and an excitement in the room which there certainly had not been half an hour ago. The number of members had increased, and they were all of them clustering round the two windows, peering into the street, and talking together in tones of expectation. What had happened or was about to happen Carew could not possibly conjecture; but towards one of the windows he presently made his way; and as he did so, he saw that in the middle of the other was standing erect the figure of Mr. Inigo, so perfectly motionless that it might have passed for a portion of the building. A variety of indignant feelings were just beginning to assert themselves, when his ears caught something of what his neighbours were saying, and Mr. Inigo was in a single moment forgotten. 'They're coming this way.' 'They are a worse lot than those of yesterday.' 'The police say they are powerless.' Such were the remarks that his neighbours were interchanging.

'What is it?' he asked, turning to an acquaintance. 'Who's coming? What will be worse than yesterday?' The man addressed stared at him. 'I,' said Carew, 'know nothing. I have but this morning returned to England.'

'Haven't you heard?' said the other. 'It's the mob, they are coming this way.'

'Here they are, here they are!' cried a dozen voices at once; and the group at the window pressed as near to the panes as possible.

'Tell me,' said Carew, still persevering in his inquiries, 'who is it? What is it? For goodness' sake tell me.'

'It is the mob—the unemployed,' was the answer. 'They are led by the professional agitators. You'll see for yourself in a minute or two. Listen to that! There they are!'

Carew did listen, and now his ears comprehended a confused and approaching noise of shouts, shrieks, groans, and the trampling of innumerable feet; and in another moment, added to this, came the crashing of broken glass, and out-

bursts of yelling laughter. At last he got so far into the bay-window as to be able to see down the street ; and what met his eyes was a black advancing mass, moving like some great volume of semi-liquid sewage, on the surface of which certain raised objects seemed floating, whilst the edges of it, in one place or another, were perpetually frothing against the sides of the shops and houses. A moment more, and this hoarse and horrible inundation was flowing past the window at which he himself was standing ; and he then began to understand its character better. Considering the stones that were flying in all directions, the position he occupied was no doubt one of danger ; but neither he nor any of the other members showed any inclination to quit it. The spectacle below seemed somehow to fascinate all of them.

A long procession of discoloured and pitiable faces was slowly defiling by ; some looking down with a sullen and dull stolidity, others fixing their eyes with a stare of ferocious wonder at the impassive group watching them : but beyond the shaking of an occasional fist, that blank stare at first was the only sign of animosity. The attention of the mob was concentrated on the opposite side of the street, where a certain University club displayed a frontage composed entirely of plate-glass and of window-frames. At the sight of this structure, as if it acted like a signal, a chorus of yells and groans burst suddenly from the multitude, and a storm of missiles began to assail the windows. About this special attack there was a determination and a violence which, so far as Carew could see, had been wanting elsewhere. To smash the glass was not nearly enough ; but showers of stones were poured into the rooms through the apertures, and presently, with a noise that thundered across the street, a heavy chandelier fell crashing from the ceiling of the reading-room.

‘That’s his club,’ exclaimed several of Carew’s fellow-spectators. ‘It’s the club he was kicked out of for advocating the assassination of Ministers.’

‘See,’ cried another, ‘there he is himself—the man in the wagon, with a red flag in his hand.’

Carew could make nothing out of these mysterious observations, but craning his head forward he looked in the direction indicated; and there was a sight which at once made the matter clear to him. One of those raised objects, which he had already seen from a distance, was now approaching; and it proved to be what his neighbours had just hinted. It was a huge open wagon drawn by four horses. On the shafts, and on the sides, were seated perhaps a dozen men, wildly gesticulating to the crowd. Whatever they were, they were plainly not English workmen. Their long, lank hair, and their wild moustaches, which waved and bristled, with an affectation of ruffianly dandyism, said at least as much as that.

Carew glanced for a moment at this cluster of scarecrows, and then his eyes fixed themselves on a figure which rose above them. This was a man seated in a rude arm-chair, which had been propped up on a packing-case. If his satellites looked wild, he looked a great deal wilder; not, indeed, in respect of his dress or hair, for in that way his appearance was quiet and common enough: but he was shouting to those around him like a maniac loose from Bedlam, and waving the red flag which he held, with corresponding gestures. Sometimes he seemed to use it as a sign of encouragement, sometimes to indicate some particular building. Meanwhile his eyes were starting out of his head; and his whole face was flickering with the livid gleam of insanity. Carew started at the spectacle. This figure was Foreman.

When the wagon reached the club, which was the special object of attack, it halted; the crowd moved round it like water about a rock; and Foreman began to shout with a voice of redoubled emphasis. Most of what he said Carew failed to catch; but several times he distinguished such broken phrases as ‘Blood for blood, I tell you,’ and ‘A life for a life.’ Finally this was audible: ‘Is there no

food in there, think you? Those men know how to get it, and so might you, who deserve it more than they do. What keeps your bellies empty? Not want of food in the country, but want of courage in yourselves. You're afraid—that's what you are! But what is it you fear? Better to die fighting, I tell you, than die starving!

The words did not fall idly. The harangue was not ended before a rush was made for the doors of the shattered club. At the threshold there was a fierce but short struggle; then, whatever opposition there was was overborne, and a crowd of squalid forms swarmed into the interior. Presently, from the broken windows a number of incongruous objects began to be hurled into the street—books, the cushions of sofas, and, in a moment more, cabbages, joints of meat, and various other eatables. All of these the mob pitched wildly about, with shouts of derision, and finally trampled them under foot—all except one leg of mutton, which, having found its way to the opposite side of the street, finished by being pitched against the window next that in which Carew was stationed. This incident, to him only partly visible, elicited a shout of laughter, which, though certainly sufficiently sinister, had more in it of derisive amusement than of mere brute ferocity. It was so loud and sudden that it attracted the attention of Foreman, who, turning round, and having stared for a few moments, began to swell the clamour with hysterical merriment of his own. 'Eggs!' he shouted to the men around him; 'eggs! eggs!' And in another instant, following the course of the mutton, a shower of eggs came hurtling towards the fated window. Oddly enough, something of the laughter of the street seemed to find an echo amongst the members of the club themselves. Carew moved back into the room to see what possibly could have happened; and the first thing that met his eyes was a rapidly retreating object, which looked not unlike a gigantic running daffodil. A second glance revealed to him what this rarity was. It was nothing else than Mr. Inigo, yellow from head to foot with the yolks of

a hundred eggs—eggs which, plainly, were exceedingly far from fresh.

‘It was done in an instant,’ said one of the men who had been near him. ‘Foreman—or whatever the devil’s name is in the cart there—pointed him out to his myrmidons, who, to say the truth, are d—d good shots with their beastliness. Before Inigo knew where he was he was completely covered in front, and the moment he turned his back, his back was in the same condition. What’s become of him now? Gone off, is he, to clean himself? Hang him! I declare that first he ought to have himself photographed. What do you say, Carew? It is a duty he owes to history.’

Another shout from outside recalled both the speakers to the window. The crowd in St. James’s Street had by this time almost passed; indeed, little was left of it but a more or less straggling rear. But the dense mass was pouring itself into Piccadilly, and there a scene was beginning of far more savage excitement. Stones were flying with greater force and frequency; the noise of broken glass was more sustained and ominous; and, presently, a member came rushing into the club from Bennet Street, with his hat crushed, and his coat and waistcoat torn, bringing the news that all the shops were being looted. At the same moment another member, who had quitted the room a couple of minutes previously, was heard bringing other news, which received a far louder welcome. ‘What do you think, now!’ he exclaimed. ‘Inigo will die happy. One of the mob has called him a “bl—y aristocrat.”’

When some alarming event actually happens before our eyes we often accept it with a dull apathetic coolness, which, when imagining it beforehand, we should hardly conceive possible. This was the case with Carew now. No sooner had the mob quitted St. James’s Street than he quietly subsided into the chair in which he had before been

dozing, and, picking up the paper which was lately so void of interest to him, he became at once absorbed in it.

There he learnt that during the last two days there had been demonstrations of working men in various parts of London, their object being to call public attention to the extent and depth of the distress then prevalent, and to the number of those who were absolutely without any employment. These demonstrations in the first instance had been orderly, both in their programme and in their conduct. Following close as they did on the Parliamentary elections, the chief idea in the minds of their original promoters was to impress the new members—the majority of whom were Conservatives—with the gravity of the crisis under which so many of their constituents were suffering. But in each case, or nearly so, these meetings had been broken up, and turned, as far as possible, into a savage and menacing riot by organised gangs under the direction of the League of Social Democrats—a body made desperate by their late defeat at the polls, and anxious to turn to their purpose every form of popular suffering. Carew gathered further that an immense mass meeting had been convened that very day in Trafalgar Square; and at it resolutions of a more or less Conservative character were to have been put to the unemployed by certain of their most competent leaders. He gathered also that in this case, as in the others, the Social Democrats were known to contemplate interference, and that some disturbance was accordingly thought probable.

This was all he could learn from the morning's paper; but he had hardly done reading it before a succession of telegrams began to arrive, and took up the broken narrative. Everything had happened exactly as had been anticipated, with only two exceptions. The body of men which the Socialist leaders had brought with them was far larger and far more promiscuous; their own disciples were mixed in it with the vilest dregs of the population, and thieves and theorists were shouting side by side; their own speeches,

had been unprecedented in violence and ferocity, and were evidently designed to promote some actual outbreak. In addition to this, from some unexplained reason, the police, like the witches in Macbeth, seemed to have 'made themselves air,' and there was not a sign to be seen anywhere that law and order had a single official guardian.

Here, indeed, there was matter for grave reflection ; and, quite unconscious how time was going, Carew seized on another of the papers, whose columns were full of discussions on the present condition of the labour-market and the sufferings of the labouring classes. At Glasgow, Leicester, Birmingham, Northampton, in nearly every town, the same distress was prevalent. There was the same cry—now fierce, now lamentable—from thousands upon thousands of men, all presumably honest, who asked for no gift of food, but merely for the means of earning it ; and how to supply these means, except, perhaps, for the moment, was a question which seemed to astound and baffle everybody. There was a long succession of letters addressed to the Editor about it, but Carew's eyes strayed through a good half-dozen of them without being caught by anything that seemed worth his attention. At least four out of those he looked at were by clergymen, and though not defending any resort to violence, certainly tended to palliate it by the pity they expressed for the sufferers, and the sensational pictures drawn of the popular misery.

On reading these a sense of irritation seized him, and all his own opinions on economic and social subjects, which he had been forming so anxiously and carefully with the help of Mr. Stanley, woke in his mind from the sleep into which Miss Capel had thrown them, as suddenly as the inmates woke in the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty. Jumping up from his chair, he went to one of the writing-tables, and, taking the largest sheet of paper he could find, addressed the following letter himself to the journal he had just been reading.

‘Sir,—I am probably quite as humane as most people, and am quite as much touched by the sorrow and wants of others. But in cases like the present it seems to me wholly wrong to approach the public or the Government through the sense of pity. The ills of the body politic are like those of the individual body. They require in the doctor who is to cure them, not pity, but knowledge and self-possession. Indeed pity, if not kept strictly in order, tends to make the use of knowledge impossible. If a surgeon who is to operate on me begins to cry over his instruments, I shall distrust his skill rather than thank him for his sympathy ; and the best security I can have for his doing his best for me will be simply the importance of my cure to himself.

‘It is just the same with the statesman when dealing with any popular misery. In his capacity of a statesman, such misery ought to concern him, not on account of what the miserable suffer themselves, but because their misery is a danger to the entire community. An Irish agitator not long since described education as a kind of moral dynamite ; and of education as he conceived it—that is to say, as a tissue of ignorant and rancorous lies—the description is no doubt true : but, applied to misery, it is even truer. Its exactness is absolutely perfect. Masses of men who, under existing social conditions, suddenly fall from comparative prosperity into privation, and see before them no hope for the future, become dangerous by the laws of social chemistry, as surely as, under chemical treatment, do the harmless materials of dynamite. Like dynamite, too, they are not self-exploding. They remain dumb and impassive till the fuse is applied by the agitator. Then an explosion follows. It is useless to blame the people. The agitator alone is guilty, and there is no guilt in the world of so deep a dye as his. Could he insure a new order of things by blowing up the old, we might, perhaps, call him a hero ; but the only result of his explosion is, that the people themselves are crushed under whatever ruin they have caused. The

structure of society still remains unchanged, or changed only in being for a short time disjointed.

‘There remains, however, also this question for society to consider. Is it, in the present and prospective condition of trade, secreting a constant or a growing mass of explosive misery? If so, there is serious trouble ahead for us. It may not be the fault of society, it may be its misfortune only, that this misery is secreted by it; it will not be the fault of the miserable if they cause as well as suffer it. Blame is equally useless and equally inapplicable in either case; but unless this diseased secretion can be checked, it is impossible for a sane man to imagine that, in such a country as England, society can ever again experience its old security. Neither poppy nor mandragora will ever medicine it to that sound state which, up till lately, we have been accustomed to consider natural to it.’

Carew, when he had written this, which he did with care, and had re-read it, was conscious, as he said to himself, of feeling somehow a man again. ‘Blame the people!’ he repeated as he put his letter into the box. ‘Poor devils! Why, as I watched the crowd just now, I was far more inclined to cry over the sight than to be angry at it. As for Foreman and his crew, I would willingly string the lot of them up to a lamp-post. But the others—even the roughs and thieves—*sunt lacrymæ rerum*. They are the tears of things, and they are the riddle of things.’

In the middle of these reflections the striking of a clock roused him. He looked at his watch, and found, to his great surprise, that it was high time for him to be hastening back to his chambers. When he emerged from his club the street was perfectly quiet; but for the first time, he realised the violence of the tempest that had passed. As he crossed Piccadilly there was hardly a house westward which, so far as a glance could inform him, had not suffered damage of some kind. Several jewellers’ shops, the windows of which were generally glittering, were nothing now but

so many black openings, which scared-looking men were hastily protecting with shutters ; and the whole pavement in front of a well-known fruit-dealer's was a singular pulp of trodden flowers and pineapples. In Mayfair, however, everything was just as usual. Cabs and carriages were passing and repassing, just as if no disturbance had happened within a hundred miles ; footmen were knocking at doors ; ladies were leaving cards ; and Carew found, when he reached his rooms, that his servant had not heard of there being any riot at all. He began to feel as if the whole affair had been a dream ; and thoughts of Miss Capel, the Esterel mountains, howling mobs, broken windows, and, lastly, the kneeling figure of Miss Consuelo Burton at Mass, came floating through his brain in dizzy and quick succession. But on his way to the station he was recalled sharply to the sense that he was moving in a world of realities. He came again across the track of the rioters, who had apparently made their way up South Audley Street and Park Lane also, as in both of these thoroughfares there was hardly a shop or house which had not a window broken or else a door defaced. 'And to think,' he said to himself, when he was at length seated in the train, and was slowly gliding out from under the arches of Paddington—'to think that it was only two short days ago that a girl's eyes, looking at me in a forest of fairyland, seemed to me to mean either the failure or the success of a lifetime !'

CHAPTER III.

MORE REALITIES.

WHEN he reached his own station it was nearly eleven. The moon was shining brightly, and he received a curious shock as he recognised the outlines of the tall familiar hedgerows, the untrimmed thatch of a barn on the far side of the road, the line of white palings which fenced in the

platform, and the old-fashioned brougham that was awaiting him just beyond them. Stranger still seemed to him the turnings in the narrow lanes that he had known from boyhood, the gates he had swung on under his nurse's tutelage, and the very ditches where once he had stooped for water-cress. All was the same, and yet, in a way, how changed ! In one miniature creek he recollected he had lost a knife, his treasure when he was seven years old, and he felt half inclined now to jump out of the carriage and look for it. Presently, shining like a linen sheet in the dimness, there came in sight the first outlying cottage of Otterton. Carew, in his childhood, had paid many a happy visit there. He could see at this moment the row of mugs on the dresser, and feel again on his tongue the taste of the delicious cider. The face of the old man who lived there seemed again to beam on him, and the wife, half deference and half affection, to drop a delighted curtsy. In his mind's eye he saw them both ; but, like the brothers of Helen, 'them the life-giving earth hid now' in the village churchyard. Presently, he was entering the village street itself—a long irregular line of silent sleeping dwellings ; and now the carriage had sharply turned a corner, and beyond him lay what looked like a world of shadow and of woodland.

Against this background something was gleaming dimly. It was a lofty arch between two decaying lodges. Carew leaned his head out to take in every detail of this structure. In one window a faint light was glimmering ; over the archway was a huge stone scutcheon, intricate with illegible quarterings ; there was a heavy gate in the very act of being opened ; there was an old woman in a white cap who curtsied ; and in another moment the carriage had passed by her, gravel was crunching under it, and the moonlight was dimmed with trees.

Carew, as he breathed the air, felt it was charged with memories. The very soul of the earth in which his family had been rooted seemed to be floating in the smell of the damp dead leaves. Presently he had quitted the wood and

was speeding through the open park, where the moonlight undulated white over far-reaching knolls and glades, and slid in a sluggish film on the waters of a noiseless river. Now there came into view immemorial clumps of elm-trees, and a long avenue meeting the distant sky-line ; and a gathering consciousness of what his family was, of what it was to be the heir of so many centuries, came from the shadows and the branches and invaded his imagination. Now he was passing the gabled house of the gardener, now the long walls of the old-fashioned kitchen-garden. Now the carriage had rumbled under the arch of a lofty gate-house ; a row of outbuildings capped with a line of turrets was seen for a moment dimly stretching away from him ; and at last a plunge through a grove of enormous ilexes brought him out before a vision of old towers and oriels, part of which plainly belonged to an inhabited house, but the more striking of which were just as plainly ruinous.

The butler who opened the door, a tremulous grey-haired man, greeted Carew with so solemn a smile of welcome as to fill him at once with some vague presentiment of evil.

‘I’m glad you’ve come, sir,’ he said. ‘We’ve been in a bad way here.’ Carew asked him to what it was he alluded. ‘It’s not the Squire, sir ; he’s much the same as usual. It’s Mr. Horace. Hush, sir, go softly. He’s in the west bedroom, and a noise in the hall may wake him. The doctor’s been here twice to-day ; and he has to-night a nurse who is sitting up with him. There’s supper, sir, in the small library, and Mrs. Samuel has got the Countess’s room ready for you, because your own, she thought, was too near Mr. Horace’s. The doctor says he must have no sound to disturb him.’

Carew, the following morning, was roused from a heavy sleep by his servant undoing the tall creaking shutters ; and his eyes were hardly well free from drowsiness before in the man’s aspect he detected a certain gravity, which, when he announced the hour, was still more unmistakable.

‘It’s eight o’clock, sir,’ he said. There was a pause. He then continued : ‘Have you heard, sir? There’s bad news. Mr. Horace, sir, died about four o’clock this morning.’

From the moment Carew had entered the house he had felt in the air a cold presentiment of death ; but this had not made him the better able to bear it. It merely increased the solemnity of the event, with the added solemnity of a dim prophecy verified. He asked a few of the ordinary questions as to the manner in which the end had come, and he learned that his uncle had died in a kind of a stupor, itself so like death that the nurse could hardly tell at what moment actual death had happened.

As he descended the broad stairs, with their worn Brussels carpet, he saw that the blinds had already been drawn down. Crossing a long gallery, towards the room in which he was to breakfast, he dropped a book he was carrying on the bare oak floor, and a flock of echoes instantly filled the air, like so many startled pigeons. Picking the book up, he saw the butler standing a little way off, and holding a door open ; and he looked at him with an air of apology for the noise that had just been made. The old man understood the look perfectly.

‘Ah, sir,’ he said, ‘you needn’t go softly now. Mr. Horace sleeps too sound for any of us to wake him. I was to say, sir,’ he added presently, as he was uncovering the dishes on the breakfast-table, ‘that the Squire would be glad to see you at half past twelve.’ Carew had thus the whole morning to himself, and he welcomed that prospect as much as he could welcome anything. Directly his breakfast was over he had an interview with the nurse. He learnt from her every detail she had to tell him, and then, for a few moments, visited the bed of death, and watched the upturned face that lay on the white pillow, as clear and quiet as if moulded in yellow wax. ‘Ah,’ thought Carew, amongst many other reflections, ‘Mr. Inigo will play no more whist with you, or haunt your dinner-table to scrape acquaintance with peers.’

This brief visit over, he wandered out of doors, and avoiding as far as possible every gardener or domestic, he roamed about, contemplating the house and its precincts, and struggling as he did so to collect his disordered thoughts. The house had in former days been the largest in the West of England, and had once consisted of an irregular pile of buildings, towers and cloisters, and long barn-like outhouses, ranged together round an enormous oblong court. But of this one side had little left but the foundations ; and two of the others, though still stately, were ruinous. Specially stately in its ruin was a magnificent baronial hall, which Carew's uncle, being too poor to repair it, had been forced to unroof some forty years ago ; and now the tracery of its beautiful Gothic windows showed like skeletons with the sky shining through them. One side of the quadrangle only was now inhabited, and even this formed a house of no small dimensions, though one end of it had been cut off from the rest, and had been let to the tenant who rented the home-farm. The slope that rose in the background was shadowy with magnificent timber. Old-fashioned laurel hedges gleamed below ; above was the clang of the rooks in the boughs of the leafless elm ; and, peering over the sloping slates and the chimneys, the tower of the parish church showed its belfry windows and its battlements.

Carew moved from point to point, absorbing the spectacle, with its many meanings, into himself. Everything he saw was, he felt, a part of him ; he, he felt, was himself a part of everything. Not a single object on which he could rest his eyes, even to the pollard on the farthest hill blotted against the sky, was unconnected with his own name and family. They, for eight hundred years, had been the rulers and the centre of all the life around them. They were part of the landscape ; they were part of the trees and earth. So far as traditions extended, they had always been kind landlords, and, so long as they could be, generous ones. There was not a house within miles in which their

name had not been revered as if it were almost royal. Every pinnacle on the house was part of their fossil history. The church walls were hidden with their hatchments and mural tablets. His grandmother's monument almost dwarfed the altar, the chronicle of her virtues being upheld by two cherubs, the one hugging her coat of arms, and the other, in triumph, brandishing her crown of glory. 'Nothing,' thought Carew—'nothing can alter this. We may be swept away, but we can never be replaced. We may have a new race of manufacturing plutocrats, rising and falling like so many golden sandhills. They may eclipse us in splendour, but they never will be what we are. They never will have their roots in the historic life of the country. They will never be, like us, the aristocracy of traditional England.'

The surrounding objects which had suggested these thoughts seemed also to repeat and to draw them out like a fugue. The air was keen with the smell of yet unmelted frost; and a silvery steam rose slowly from the grass and floated across the gloom of the gnarled and solemn tree-trunks. To Carew these sights and smells were as part of his own mental condition, the mind and the senses interpenetrating and explaining each other.

Presently from the church tower boomed the deep note of a bell. A long pause ensued, and then another followed it. They were tolling for his uncle's death. The sound roused him to a consciousness of his own personal situation. Had the second will of the dead man been signed? With sudden distinctness this question came to him; and yet, though he knew that something important hung upon it, it was some moments before he could recollect what. With an effort he did recollect; and then, like a reflection in some transparent water, which, the moment the eye catches it, obscures the pebbles at the bottom, a vision of blue skies and of palm-trees, and Miss Capel's face recalling him to the land of roses, floated between his heart and the visible scene before him. All his perplexities were now mapped out distinctly. The possibility of his retaining the

family estates, or at all events doing his duty by them, and restoring the family prosperity, depended on his possession of his dead uncle's fortune. Would he find that the dead hand had so ordered his fortune that the choice lay for him between his family and Miss Capel, and that he must be false to his interest in either one or the other? And if so which choice should he make?

In answering this latter question his imagination wavered; but he found as he examined himself that his will was already fixed. Much as it might cost him to renounce Miss Capel, it hardly seemed to him now within the range of conceivable possibilities that he should with his eyes open renounce his family for her. He looked again at his old ancestral surroundings, at the moss-grown slated roofs, and the ivied walls that were roofless, and he thought, 'You are more to me than any woman's heart in the world.'

Whether or no he would continue to maintain this decision, he had not long to wait before he learnt decisively that he had at any rate not been at superfluous trouble in forming it. At the hour named he was ushered into the Squire's study. It was a room which had been furnished and decorated, during the Georgian period, by the same ancestor who had built the house in London; and it was well in keeping with the aspect of its present possessor. The Squire was a perfect type of a race that is now fast dying. The cut of his pale whiskers and the locks of his grey wig connected him visibly with the præ-popular epoch; and the placid smile that dwelt on his lips and eyelids were the smile of a man so accustomed to obedient deference that he could very rarely have had occasion for frowning. Holding out to Carew a delicate wrinkled hand, he expressed quietly his pleasure at seeing him, and then, with an equal quiet, spoke of his brother's death. His manner conveyed no impression of heartlessness—he was not a heartless man; but extreme old age learns to accept everything, and the breaking of no link can much affect those for whom, in a few years at farthest, all links will be

broken—broken or reunited. The Squire then proceeded to say that he had telegraphed for the family lawyer, whose presence for several reasons would be desirable ; and he handed Carew a paper with a long list of names on it.

‘I should be glad,’ he said, ‘if you would write letters to these, and let them know what has happened—together with the date of the funeral, on which I have already decided. I thought at first of making my servant do so. A business letter he can manage well enough ; but the confounded fellow,’ said the Squire, still as quiet as ever—‘the confounded fellow would bungle over a matter like this. And now,’ he went on, when Carew had undertaken the commission, ‘there’s another little affair about which I wished to speak to you. Your poor Uncle Horace had got some ridiculous notion into his head that you were likely to make a fool of yourself with some French adventuress. He had arranged in his mind the whole course of the drama, though, as he had never seen her, it was clever in him to be able to do so. You were first to disgrace her by making her your mistress, and then to disgrace yourself by making her your wife. Of course the whole thing is a mare’s nest ; but, anyhow, he has been at the trouble of making a new will in consequence. Perhaps he has already taken steps to let you know this?’ Carew admitted that such was the case. ‘I told him,’ the Squire continued, ‘that it was a monstrous waste of trouble ; but last week he had been hearing some nonsense about you in London, and nothing would persuade him that he was not perfectly right. Practically to you it can make no possible difference ; and, at all events, now there is no use regretting it. It was only yesterday morning that this new will was signed, and I was one of the witnesses. By the way,’ he added as his nephew was leaving the room, ‘I had a letter from your sister this morning, with a poor account of your mother. After things here are finished, you’ll no doubt go over and see them.’

CHAPTER IV.

AN ECHO FROM DREAMLAND.

CAREW'S days between his uncle's death and the funeral were passed in a noiseless and almost monastic seclusion. The lawyer arrived with as little delay as possible—a spectacled freckled old gentleman, who but for his confidential intonation was like a country gentleman far more than a solicitor. Carew was glad of his friendly and sustaining presence, and passed with him nearly the whole of the subsequent mornings, visiting farms and cottages, examining their dilapidated condition, and learning afresh and in all possible detail the hopeless extent to which the property was encumbered.

‘I am as good a Tory,’ said the lawyer, wiping his spectacles—‘I am as good a Tory as any man in England, and should as much regret any legislation that tended to break up the estates of the old families. But I am bound to say, Mr. Carew, and I think you will agree with me, that when an estate is in the condition of this one, it becomes an abuse which the law should not perpetuate. Unless its old possessors acquire the means of doing their duty by it the old possessors ought to go. This I believe as firmly as any Radical. I differ from the Radical only in one point. He would cackle over any excuse for their dispossession. I should break my heart over its necessity. However,’ he added, ‘that case is not yours. It sometimes sounds indecent, when a relation is hardly dead, to begin reckoning up the advantages his death will bring one; but we are speaking now not so much of yourself as of your family; and I am, Mr. Carew, in a position to tell you positively that you are at this moment the possessor of three hundred thousand pounds. Two thirds of that sum will enable you to pay off every mortgage on this property, which else, sooner or later, I am certain would have to go. Several men have had their eyes on it already; indeed the bailiff tells me that there is

a man here now—he's been living in the largest of those two stucco villas—who would buy you out to-morrow had he only the chance of doing so. At least that's the gossip about here. Unless, however,' he added smiling, 'you forfeit your new inheritance, I trust the Carews may reign here for many a generation yet. Yes—I trust the day by-and-by will come when you may not only be able to restore your own home, but be blessed as a benefactor in every home about you.'

'I agree,' said Carew sadly—'I agree thoroughly with the view you take of families in such a position as ours. If we exist only as an abuse we had better not exist at all.'

'You,' replied the other, 'may exist otherwise ; though I fear that, as matters have turned out, there will be more difficulty than you perhaps anticipate in applying your fortune to the purposes we have just spoken of.'

Carew inquired to what kind of difficulty he alluded.

'By-and-by,' said the lawyer, 'you will be able to understand it more completely ; but I can, in a general way, put the matter intelligibly before you now. Mr. Horace Carew's wish, as you know, was so to leave his money as to deter you from making a certain marriage ; and he has compassed that end by placing a deterring penalty on your marriage with any one not a British subject. Now you will of course see that if, in the event of such a marriage, it was his intention that all his money—for this is your uncle's arrangement—that all his money, except a small portion, should pass from you to a distant relation of his wife's, he could not leave it in your power to employ the principal at your discretion in paying off the mortgages on the acres that you are bound to inherit. He wished, indeed, that you should have that power, but he was determined you should not have it until the contingency he dreaded was an impossibility. Accordingly, though, unless you marry an alien, the interest of the money left you will be paid to you during your life, you will not be able to dispose of a single penny of the principal unless and

until you marry some born British subject. I can only trust that, vexatious as the condition is, and I am sure quite uncalled for, it will not be found one difficult or distasteful to fulfil.'

This conversation took place the day after the lawyer's arrival ; and now the situation, under its most homely and practical aspect, was beginning to stare Carew very full in the face. There were two points in it which he had not before realised, in addition to those relating to his marriage or abstention from marriage. In the first place, he learnt that, as the heir to his elder uncle, he would be a far poorer man than he had had any idea of. In the second place, as the heir to his younger uncle, he would be, in fact he was, a far richer one. The alternatives before him surprised him by the sharpness of their contrast. On the one side was the complete ruin of his family—more complete and more inevitable than despondency had ever foreshadowed to him. On the other was its restoration to power, splendour, and beneficence, greater and more certain than he had ever ventured to hope.

During the whole afternoon of that day and the next he roamed about like a restless ghost, through the glades of the park, through the unweeded walks of the garden, with their furlongs of straggling laurel, through the roofless hall, through ivied vestiges of the cloisters, and again through the corridors of the inhabited house itself, his whole mind in a ferment. Generations of dingy ancestors peered at him from shadowy walls ; here and there, distinct amongst the pale tribe, were one or two fine Vandykes ; and in a low hall, with a faint smell of wood-smoke in it, there were eight tall Sir Joshuas. One of these, which was hung close to the door, was so placed that whenever the door opened the key struck the canvas, and had knocked a ragged hole in it : and in this stately and magnificent picture, which, if uncared for, would in a few years be ruined, Carew seemed to recognise an image of his own family. 'Could he,' he asked himself, 'allow all this to go? Did he not owe to it, as it

were, a filial duty? Was he not bound to save, and, if possible, to transmit it to a descendant? Could he, for the sake of any private affection, be a traitor to this trust, which, if gone, would be gone for ever?' Everything, from the crumbling towers outside to the rudest oak bench and frayed matting within, from the faintest daub in feminine water-colour fading on the wall in its tarnished frame for a century, to the sixty-four quarterings of his great-great-grandfather, which stained the daylight on the great staircase window—everything he felt to be indescribably a part of himself, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. He could not suffer it to be torn away from him.

'Had I a brother,' he said to himself, 'who might take my place—to whom all this money would go, in case I was to forfeit it, I would say to him "Take it." He might take the estates too. But of all our name, there is nobody left but me. I am not myself only; I am a family, I am an institution: and as such, I represent that principle which alone makes, or can make, civilisation worth preserving. Anyhow I think so; and if the thought is a folly, I can at least give my folly some dignity by suffering for it.'

The tone of his resolution remained pretty much like this till after his uncle's funeral, when he left Otterton for his mother's. Her home was an old manor house some twenty miles distant—small, but in its own way perfect. A tall rookery rose directly behind it, whose branches overshadowed the white clustering chimneys. A lime avenue and a garden of stocks and wallflowers made a world of quiet in front. Inside, there was china and an odour of *pot-pourri*, straight-backed chairs standing on faded Turkey carpets, and rows of calf-bound volumes such as 'Tom Jones' and 'The Spectator.'

Closely as Otterton was connected with Carew's life, the manor was connected with it in a yet more intimate way; and just as in his present frame of mind the associations of the one pained and stimulated him, so did those of the other lull, caress, and fawn on him. The waves of thought

and feeling were still with him in the state of hush that they are in so often with those who have come from a house of death ; and all the homely and kindly days of his childhood rose up in his memory as he arrived, filling him with a longing for rest, and a wish that he could again subside on them. The old grey-haired man-servant, who welcomed him smiling at the door, with his striped waistcoat, his white silk stockings, and pink cheeks like an apple, seemed to him like one of his own relations ; and as he dined with his sister in what was known as the little parlour, the rest he longed for he almost thought he had found.

His mother that evening he was not able to see. She had been for some years failing, and, as Mrs. Harley had told the Miss Burtons, Carew had always shown himself a most good and attentive son to her. But her condition was such that though always a ground of anxiety, and though one from which she could never recover, it might still be protracted for an indefinite time longer ; and except for an occasional sinking, to which her family now were accustomed, she gave no graver cause for solicitude at one time than another. It happened that the present was one of her times of weakness, and instead of dozing as usual, though a calm afternoon, in the drawing-room, for the past few days she had not quitted her bed. She had often, however, been much weaker before, and there was nothing to interfere with the flow of reciprocal information that pleasantly took place between the brother and sister. What had happened to the family in this or in that cottage, whether Mary Ann had married the young man that she used to walk with, and whether the auctioneer's daughter still wore blue gloves on Sundays—on all these little points Carew asked for enlightenment ; and especially as to who was the stranger who was living in the larger of the two villas near Otterton. But the last question was one which his sister could not answer.

Late the following morning his mother was in a condition to receive him. She was still in bed, and had just finished

her breakfast. Her weakness had long been such that her pleasure at the sight of him had found better expression in her face than in her slow and feeble articulation. It was so this morning as she just turned her head on his entrance. No words could have said to him more than that slight and difficult movement ; and he saw looking at him out of those dimmed and well-known eyes all the years of his life, and seventy-eight years of the century. The interview did not last long, nor was there much said at it ; but the scene throughout the morning was strongly stamped on his memory. On a table beside the bed were the remains of her small breakfast—a piece of broken toast and an egg-cup with its hollow shell. Beneath her chin, too, there still remained a napkin ; and on this a little of the yolk of the egg had fallen. Under ordinary circumstances nothing so offended Carew as the slightest untidiness in any one's ways at table ; but now when he thought of the hands and lips grown helpless that had once for him been the signs of such strength and help, this small and unsightly detail subdued his mind with a feeling which had been quite strange to it hitherto, and he bowed his head in reverence for the sacred weakness of age.

During the rest of the day he poked about with his sister, amongst old chests and cabinets filled with various relics ; and they had been half touched and half amused at discovering an entire fossil childhood, in a collection of toys and lesson-books. These had lately been disturbed to make room for some other lumber ; and they thought of inquiring of the servants as to the fate of some objects that were missing. This question was, however, in part answered by an accident ; for, passing through the diminutive stable-yard, their eyes chanced to be attracted by something red on a rubbish-heap ; and going nearer, and using his stick to assist him, Carew recognised amongst dead leaves and cinders the morocco covers of his diary when he was ten years old, which had then seemed to him a marvel of sumptuous splendour, and which still, no doubt, contained,

in the damp and dirt, the tremulous records of his hopeful unclouded life. He looked again, and a worm was crawling over it. 'What fools the servants are!' he exclaimed in a moment's petulance. 'I feel almost as if they had pushed me in there myself.'

These occupations, and the thoughts suggested by them, at first filled his mind completely: but by-and-by, through them and intermixed with them, other thoughts came also, gently pushing and asserting themselves. Here was a house, here were surroundings, where a man might live in comfort on no immoderate fortune. If he valued respectable antiquity and family associations, if he valued mellow refinement contrasting with mushroom finery, surely he had that here. Might he not brave the chance of having to let Otterton go, and beg Violet Capel to make a home here with him? Over and over again he asked himself this question, the girl's eyes and lips pleading with him to say 'Yes' to it; and more than once he repeated those lines of Thackeray's which Fereman had quoted in a very different temper—'Love *omnia vincit*, is immeasurably above all ambition, more precious than wealth, more noble than name. He knows not life who knows not that; he hath not felt the highest faculty of the soul who hath not enjoyed it. In the name of my wife I write the completion of hope and the summit of happiness. To have such love is the one blessing in comparison of which all earthly joy is of no value; and to think of her is to praise God.'

CHAPTER V.

AN UNEXPECTED MONITOR.

THE following morning Carew was sitting in the library toasting his feet on the brass fender. He was looking at a pile of newspapers that lay on an old spinet; he was reproaching himself for having scarcely so much as opened

them, and he was still mainly occupied with thoughts about Miss Capel, when his sister entered and said in a hurried tone that she thought their mother's state was worse than it had been yesterday. 'In fact——' she added. 'But perhaps you will come upstairs with me.'

They went. His sister entered the room before him. There was perfect silence in it. He at first saw nothing but the bed-curtains. Then he moved softly round to the foot of the bed ; and there all revealed itself. Black with her back to the light was the bending figure of the nurse ; and carefully propped up on the pillows a still face rested, with that yellow wax-like bloom upon it, the meaning of which he already knew so well.

The end had been sudden. His mother evidently had begun her breakfast as usual. It was there on the little table. Slight and trivial things become sometimes full of meaning, and Carew's eye fell on the half-drunk cup of tea and the egg half eaten. He knew at the moment that he should never forget the look of them. The breakfast and those dead lips—ten minutes ago how closely and commonly they were related ; and now between them was all the width of eternity—between that smeared egg with the spoon in it, and the life that mysteriously was not.

This event, as was not unnatural, completely changed, for the time, the whole tenour of his thoughts. Miss Capel's image, though he did not intentionally dismiss it, now receded out of the ken of his consciousness. The inevitable business matters for the next few days occupied the practical faculties both of himself and his sister ; and as for his thoughts, though he affected no conventional gloom, they kept a silent vigil over the strange something that had happened. He recalled what some one had said on the ramparts at Courbon-Loubet—that there are things in life which, however much we may talk of them, are to each, till he feels them himself, as new and as strange as death ; and amongst these, he learnt, was the death of one near to him. It was some time, indeed, before his imagination could grasp

it ; and after having asked his sister some questions she was unable to answer—questions mostly connected with the past and with the neighbourhood, he heard himself saying, ‘Well, we will ask my mother.’ And then again his mind would imperfectly correct him—‘I mean,’ he would add, ‘when she comes back.’

His feelings, as was natural, were deep rather than poignant. They sank down into his heart rather than wounded or crushed it, and affected his views of life more than his views of his own life. But at the funeral—at this second funeral, so closely following on the other—he felt at least for a moment how sharp a sting death can have for the living.

On his way to the ceremony, which took place at Otterton, reflections such as these kept on recurring to him : ‘What is half of life but the memories we share with others ? And before we are thirty a half of this half is gone. Before we are half through life we are knee-deep in the waters of death.’ Then by-and-by came the short pilgrimage to the church, and there sounded in his ears the opening words of that office which, whether a man believe or whether he disbelieve, is more moving and terrible than any tragedy ever written, bringing him face to face with all that is worth hoping for, or else with the thought that all hopes are vain. The extreme simplicity, too, of the whole proceedings touched him—the church with its square pews, its huge pulpit and reading-desk, the arms of Carew on every panel of the gallery, the lion and the unicorn keeping guard over the altar, and the absence of any one except a few neighbours and the villagers.

All those impressions, solemnly as he received them, he could take in and assimilate more or less as a philosopher ; but it was different when, leaving the church, they stood by the grave’s brink—for it was always his mother’s wish to lie, not in the vault, but in the churchyard. He had not realised fully the personal import of it all to him till he saw descending actually into that horrible gash in the earth—that cold,

insulting mud, that damp and streaming clay—the thing which but yesterday he would have sheltered from the least wind or from a raindrop. He thought of his diary, and how he had seen it on the rubbish-heap; and now, the mother who had given him that diary—they were casting her into a rubbish-heap yet more hideous; they were doing to her what he had lately shuddered to see done even to a little morsel of morocco.

He bit his lip. Every nerve was strained to prevent his feelings finding some natural outlet. At last, just before those assembled separated, he raised his eyes, venturing to look about him, and there, standing by the grave on the side opposite to him, was an object that proved a new trial to his fortitude. It was an old woman ten years older than his mother, who had begun life as his mother's maid, and who had never, till her strength failed her, left the service of the family. For many years now she had been settled in a cottage, and Carew was not aware that she was any longer living. She seemed to have risen from the dead to take her last look at the dead.

Presently he went up to her, and taking her by both the hands, 'Nancy,' he said, 'and don't you remember me?' She looked at him doubtfully; he then explained who he was, and a light of recognition like the last ray of a sunset suddenly lit up the old woman's face. She seized his hand again, and began to speak to him of her memories—both of his childhood and his mother's; and then ended, with a glance towards the grave, 'I shall be going to join her there soon. I ought to have gone already.'

'And I too,' said Carew, as he turned away from her. 'We both of us belong to a world that is dead or dying.'

His sister and he were to remain at the Hall for the present; they had neither of them yet decided on their immediate movements in the future—and the rest of the day was passed in the vacant quiet which so often succeeds an event like that of the morning. On Carew's mind there was vaguely an impression as if it was Sunday; his very

thoughts seemed afraid to stir themselves into their common secular activity. Next morning, however, an unforeseen incident roused them.

He had wandered away after breakfast into a remoter part of the park, trying to review calmly his situation as regarded Miss Capel. His feelings about her were pretty much what they had been when the shock of his mother's death had rendered them, as it were, insensible; and now slowly and faintly they were coming to life again, untouched as yet by the hostile associations of Otterton. His tenderness for the girl was once more asserting itself; his imagination once more in its mirror was showing him the magic of her eyes. Wholly occupied with these inward events, he passed mechanically through a door in the park wall, and continued his walk in the public road outside. In a few minutes this brought him to one of the gates—a grandiose entrance between two Georgian lodges, with the coats-of-arms crumbling from the friable stone. Within, there stretched away a long avenue of elms, some of whose boughs lay broken and untouched on the ground, whilst grass and weeds were invading the stony roadway.

By this gate Carew was intending to re-enter, but he paused at a little distance, struck by its mournful aspect, whilst the claims of the family honour gave a timid prick to his conscience. He paused and he looked thoughtfully at it. Suddenly his eye was caught by an unusual object—an exceedingly smart brougham, standing some way off in the road. Moved by his curiosity, he slowly strolled by it. There was no one inside, so he was able to examine it carefully. All over it was a gloss of virgin varnish. There was a gloss that was almost equal on the coats of the horses; and though outside there was no device of any kind, inside there was a profusion of ivory fittings, each one of which was, apparently, florid with some large monogram. In contrast to this—‘Or could it,’ Carew asked, ‘be in keeping with it?’—the coachman and footman held themselves rather slouchingly, and seemed to be indulging themselves

in less reserved conversation than is perhaps usual amongst gentlemen's servants when on duty.

Having seen what he could, Carew was turning back, when he descried emerging from the one lodge that was inhabited, a man who seemed, from a distance, to be dressed for Piccadilly or Bond Street. The stranger moved a little way into the road, thrust his hands into his pockets, and began staring at the lodges. Carew by this time was within some thirty feet of him, and was so struck by his unexplained presence and his behaviour, that, leaning against a gate, he began to watch him curiously. Who was he? What was he? Was he the undertaker's man? Was he a doctor? Was he the head of some mourning establishment, come at his sister's order? He might be a doctor, perhaps; and yet, Carew argued, few doctors but those of the lowest class could invest the quiet of their dress with such a loud ostentation of quiet. A second glance showed that he could hardly be the undertaker or the mourning-man, for his trousers had a purple stripe on them, and in his little finger there was embedded a diamond ring. At last he turned, and with his head well in the air, and treating Carew to a blank stare in passing, he entered the brougham, which had already advanced to meet him.

Carew fancied he had seen this man's face before; but, think as he would, he could not remember where. He entered the lodge, and inquired of the woman who lived there if she knew the stranger's name, and what it was he wanted. The woman said she had seen him several times lately, walking in the road, and pausing to inspect the lodges; and she gathered—though from what source she did not specify—that he lived somewhere outside the neighbouring town. Then, following what is a common rustic practice, she brought out the only definite part of her answer last.

The stranger, she said, had seen the bailiff talking to her, whom he recognised and at once accosted. He seemed to have something of special importance to say to him, and as it was cold standing in the open air, they had both gone

inside and sat by the back-kitchen fire. The bailiff was there now if Mr. Carew wanted to see him, and would no doubt tell him more than she could.

Carew found this to be no more than the truth. The bailiff was full of the interview that had just ended. 'I was wishing, sir,' he said, 'the moment that you came in, to be able to tell you about it before you went away. I did mention, you may remember, at the time of Mr. Horace's funeral, that there was a party residing in the neighbourhood who had his eye upon this property. He's been trying to find out all he can about it; he's been busier than ever since then. Well, sir, that's the gentleman—the gentleman—though to my mind he looks much more like a hair-dresser. He talks to you,' the bailiff continued, in apology for this freedom of speech, 'as if you were no better than the dirt under his feet, and he puts questions to you as if he were hearing you your catechism.'

'Do you know his name?' said Carew.

'I've heard it,' said the bailiff, scratching his head, 'but I don't rightly remember it. I never knew such a gentleman to ask questions. He asks about rents, and leases, and hares and rabbits; and at last he got, sir, to asking about the Squire, and if it wasn't true that the Squire was very hard on the poor. I said, if every rich man had as kind a heart as the Squire—— Snapper, sir—that's his name, sir—it's just come back to me. I thought 'twas a name like one one sees now in the newspapers. Maybe he's some relation.'

'Relation!' exclaimed Carew. 'It's the man himself. The devil's grown a moustache—that was why I did not recognise him.'

He left the lodge in a mood very different from that in which he entered it. Once again his mind was in full activity. It turned from his private emotions to what he conceived to be his duties. 'Let the property pass to a man like that!' he muttered. 'I would sooner never speak to Miss Capel or to any other woman again.'

CHAPTER VI.

ROUSED AT LAST.

CAREW'S mind was now fully awake. He suddenly realised in a way which he had not done hitherto the full practical meaning of the large fortune that had been left to him, and the future which that fortune, especially if it became his own absolutely, opened out to him so certainly and so immediately. All his theories as to the duties and the capacities of an aristocracy, all his knowledge and study of the economic problems of the period, he now felt he might begin to translate into definite practice. A sense overcame him of sudden impatient restlessness. He could no longer live on emotion, or even on thought. His whole moral being craved to be fed with action. His emotion had turned into a hunger for something beyond itself. It no longer sufficed him to reason about the poor and about the people ; about the conditions of their employment, the rates of their wages, and the cost and quality of their lodging. He longed to feel that there were a certain number of families whose daily lives he could help to order happily ; that there was actual distress he might do something to cure ; and that he was doing his best to set a real example of that devotion to all whom his power could benefit, which alone, in his estimation, gave power either permanence or dignity.

Under the stirring influences of prospects and thoughts like these, his whole conscience became like a kind of litany—a cry, a supplication to some unnamed Providence, that his life might be granted the development which, and which alone, could complete it.

In most men's lives there have been analogous moments. Their importance is often misunderstood. No doubt, in any such excitement and exaltation of the moral being, in any such passing *clairvoyance* into the conceivable possibilities of life, coupled as it usually is with the desire to make these

possibilities facts, judgment, imagination, self-esteem, and hope say a thousand things which are soon seen to be exaggerated, and perhaps may excite a smile. But for all that, they need not be unreal. They are not unreal if, in spite of their exaggeration, they express and for a moment illuminate a tendency which is permanent, but which usually operates in obscurity, and clogged with difficulty and obstruction. Most men would be able to bear witness to this. There are occasional moments, indeed, when the mind is full of oracles, when it hardly knows itself for all the voices filling it. Such moments are the seeds of moral changes, of new departures, though too often they are seeds that never grow.

Of this last fact Carew was perfectly well aware ; and several times when, in the course of his meditations, his moral excitement was gaining its completest possession of him, he would sober himself by the prosaic reflection that all the fine things he was saying to himself were addressed to himself as he might be rather than as he was. And then again, as a correction to such moral despondency, he would recall to himself the following pregnant couplet :—

Deeds in hours of insight willed
May be through hours of gloom fulfilled.¹

But even now, without waiting for the future, he was aware that these hours of insight had had already one practical effect on him. For the first time since he had yielded to the witchery of Miss Capel's presence, he felt that even though he lost her life might be still complete. She was no longer necessary to make his future satisfying. He still knew her charms ; he still knew the magic of her wide childlike eyes. She was like sunshine, she was like a perfume, she was like a strain of plaintive music breathing through a garden of roses, or fresh from the breast of a blue southern sea. He knew the power that her nature had over him ; but he knew it as he might know the power of a dose of opium, which each time he repeated it would have

¹ Mr. Matthew Arnold.

the same effects, but effects from which, for the time being, he was free. Once more he was master of himself. He felt capable of choosing the life which the thought and experience of years had affirmed and reaffirmed to be the life of rational duty—the only life which could appease his unsatisfied consciousness, and, by affording work to every one of his faculties, would perhaps yield him at last some resting-place for his spirit.

How should he make use of this free interval, in which once more his intellectual conscience was supreme, and passion stood at his feet ready to do its bidding? This was the question he asked himself, and he asked it with a business-like deliberation. ‘Any new state of the thoughts, feelings, and desires,’ he wrote in his diary as a sort of mental record, ‘may be arrested and realised if we can but translate them into action, and this may make a new turning-point for the whole life and character. The danger which I run is that of never translating them into action at all; and if I yield to this danger I know quite well what becomes of me. My life, instead of a structure, is simply a shapeless mound of subsiding aspirations, out of which it is as easy to make any useful career as it would be to mould a statue or a brick out of treacle.’

In this state of critical self-distrust, one image, and only one, came back to him, which brought with it suggestions of action, vigour, and life. This was the image of Miss Consuelo Burton; and even that, for external reasons, was shrouded in a veil of despondency. All the details of their last parting returned to him, and the contemptuous coldness of her last words and her letter. Much, he reflected, might no doubt be explained by some false reports—he did not quite know what—which she had heard of him; and her coldness—this was certainly just possible—might have betrayed interest in him far more than indifference.

‘But still,’ he asked himself, ‘what must be her opinion of me if she is so ready to believe me, at a moment’s notice, guilty of anything that could make me deserve such treat-

ment? Probably by this time what interest she may have taken in me has died out, not to be reawakened. Perhaps, after all, there was not much interest ever.' Anyhow, he continued to reflect, it would be very difficult to approach her again, at all events immediately. How to explain matters, or indeed what matters to explain, he did not know. There were no ostensible grounds for any explanation at all. Added to this, he was not certain where she was. Thus, in spite of both the definite conduct and the help and the encouragement to pursue it, which the very thought of her suggested to him, she seemed to his imagination to resemble a light, bright indeed, and sending through the gloom its kindly message of rays to him, but shining in vain over the sheets of a broad intervening water.

His feelings, therefore, will be easily understood—the sudden throb of his heart and the tingling of all his pulses—when he saw one morning, on coming down to breakfast, a re-directed letter for him, bearing a foreign postage-stamp. Was it from Miss Capel? Was it from Miss Consuelo Burton? On taking it up he saw that it was from neither; but it did not prove on that account to be any the less interesting.

CHAPTER VII.

AN OLD ROAD REOPENING.

CAREW'S correspondent was none other than Mrs. Harley. Her letter was dated 'Rome,' and ran as follows:—

'DEAR MR. CAREW,—You must not be surprised at getting a long letter from me; for I have many things to ask you, and many things also to tell you. I am going to begin with my asking.

'What have you been doing with yourself all this long time? We had hoped we might have seen you again at Nice, before we left it; and we were much disappointed that you gave no sign of yourself. We are here till after

Easter, with some mutual friends of ours ; and after Easter, as I think I told you before, we go, for perhaps a week or so, to the Italian lakes. You were good enough to say that you would get us an order to see the beautiful villa and gardens on the Lago Maggiore which belong to your Milanese relations—the “cousin Alfonso” you have sometimes told us about. If this reaches you in time, will you write to me here, or else to the Poste Restante at Baveno. I wish there was a chance of your being at the villa yourself and doing the honours of the place for us. I know you do go there often, and that it is a sort of second Courbon-Loubet for you. I think that that is all I have to ask you—what have you been doing? will you send me the order? will you be there yourself? I will now go on to tell you things.

‘Of course you have heard how our friend Foreman has been distinguishing himself. He now pretends, as you will have seen in the papers—he has also had the face to write to me to the same effect—that he had nothing to do with these riots, and that they were simply the result of accident. He is frightened out of his life at the prospect of being prosecuted by the Government ; and a friend tells me, who saw him a few days ago, that his state of nervousness is something really pitiable. George says he is like some man in Rabelais—would it be Panurge?—who swore, “By the pavilion of Mars, I fear nothing but danger!” I must, however, do our Socialist this justice : if he does fear danger he certainly does not fear exertion ; for, ill as he is, he went suddenly back to London—I wrote to you at the time about it—not very long after he left Courbon-Loubet. We now see the reason why. I’ve not the remotest doubt in my own mind that the whole thing was hatching for many weeks beforehand. He was brooding over it whilst he was under your roof. In fact, now one comes to think of it, he told us as much there.

‘But, my dear Mr. Carew, my real aim in writing to you is not simply to gossip about Foreman and his vagaries.

My real aim is to tell you that I think I can clear up a mystery, the results of which you had every right to feel annoyed at. I mean the recall of Miss Consuelo Burton from your delightful and hospitable house. The subject perhaps is one which is a little delicate to touch upon. However, I think we may contrive to get over the difficulty. After all, what is there to be shy about? I am a woman of the world, writing to a man of the world, and our being what we are gives us this advantage at least, that whilst I hope our feelings have not become blunted, we are able to speak about them with a convenient and comfortable directness.

‘Let me begin, then, by reminding you that I am perfectly well aware of the way in which rumour once connected your name with that of a certain beautiful though not very respectable lady—the Countess de Saint Valery. I think I know the rights and wrongs of the story pretty accurately. You have spoken about it yourself to me. I am aware too—and so must you be, though you can hardly have been told it directly—that the elder Miss Burtons, at one period of their acquaintance with you, fully believed you to have a serious attachment for their sister—and I must remark in a parenthesis that I don’t think you could do better—but this belief was quickly and rudely disturbed by the reports which reached them, and to them seemed reliable, that all the while they were wasting their most Catholic encouragement upon you, and preparing to welcome you into the bosom both of the Church and their family, you were carrying on an intrigue with the person I just mentioned, and that you would have gone off with her yourself if a rival had not forestalled you.

‘Well, of course I think myself they were a couple of fools to believe this ; but, given the belief, you can hardly wonder at the consequences of it—that they acted as they did, and gave you the cold shoulder. Afterwards, however, they heard another side of the question, and began to suspect that their thoughts about you—which, to do them

justice, they never made public—might possibly have been far too severe. Of course that you should know such a person as Madame de Saint Valery at all was an offence in their eyes, and took some of the bloom off your sanctity. Still, you were not hopelessly lost to their favour, and you had a chance of salvation left you in their uncovenanted mercies. When they met you at Nice I was able to be your advocate, and I told them what geese they had been to swallow all that gossip against you ; but your best advocate was yourself. The best proof of the good impressions you made is the fact of their allowing me to bring Consuelo with me to stay with you. Of course the presence of Lady Chislehurst and Mr. Stanley had a good deal to do with that ; but the impression made on them by you yourself personally had, I am sure, even more ; and, as you see, they were becoming quite willing to receive you back again on the old footing.

‘ Now comes a mystery on which I can throw no light. Perhaps you can. In some way or other you must have offended Mr. Inigo. How, I cannot imagine ; but he evidently must have some grudge against you ; for what do you think he has been doing ? I will tell you.

‘ Whilst we were staying with you in the *château*, Elfrida and Mildred were away on some little expedition of their own—I think it was to a convent ; and they only returned on the morning before I and Consuelo left. They had hardly been in Nice for a couple of hours when Mr. Inigo found them out and pounced on them, filling their ears with a long tale of your iniquities. That Foreman was staying with you he learnt from Lady Mangotsfield, for whom, I am told, he had been constantly on the look-out ever since Lord Stonehouse introduced him to her. So this piece of news at once went to Elfrida, and along with it another, which no doubt will astonish you. Mr. Inigo asserted that the reason for your being in the neighbourhood was nothing else but the presence there of Madame de Saint Valery ; and he added, to clench matters, that he had

himself seen you leaving her house at twelve o'clock that very night on which you dined with me. Nor was this all, but he raked up again all the old gossip about you, assuring Elfrida that it was true. How he got her—her and Mildred too—to listen to him, is more than I am able to say. But it turns out that they did so. Poor things! In intentions, no doubt, they are as harmless as doves; but that kind of harmlessness, when lacking the serpent's wisdom, is very often as bad as the serpent's malice.

'Fancy! this is what they wrote to Consuelo about you—at last I have seen the letter. "We are surprised to hear that Mr. Foreman is staying at the château. We consider it very undesirable"—and so on, and so on; you can imagine the sort of thing. "We also hear that Mr. Carew is engaged to a lady of such a character as to show us that we were mistaken in thinking his house would be a proper place for you to visit at, and we are sure that Lady Chislehurst must be mistaken equally. Anyhow, we must request that you come away at once, and we are writing to Mrs. Harley—though we have told her nothing more than is necessary—to ask her to make your departure as easy and as comfortable as she can for you."

'There! what do you think of that? Perhaps your eyes are opened a little now.

'Luckily, however, there is more to add. There has at last appeared on the scene—I don't know if I remember rightly the little Latin I once on a time learnt—a *deus ex machinâ*, in the person of your old friend and defender Lord Stonehouse. He is not here now, but he has been at Rome for a few days with us; and it was only the day before yesterday that, quite by accident, he found out there had been any trouble about you. I must describe the scene to you. I can't help laughing when I think of it.

'I and the three Burtons were sitting together in the morning, trying to settle what should be our plans for the day, when Lord Stonehouse came in and began talking of some palace he had been visiting. Amongst other things

he said : "There were enough of coats-of-arms there to satisfy even our friend Carew. By the way, Elfrida, where is he? He's such a devoted admirer of yours, you ought to know. You should have brought him to Rome and made him kiss the toe of his Holiness."

'You should have seen the look Elfrida gave him. One could almost have fancied that her face was turned into ice, she seemed so completely to refrigerate the whole room; and as for Consuelo, I only gave one glance at her, and her cheeks were scarlet. Lord Stonehouse, with his curious and almost old-womanish shrewdness, at once saw something was wrong, and looked at Elfrida, smiling out of his screwed-up eyes with a patient patronising curiosity. Consuelo the next moment went out of the room, and then in an instant, before Elfrida could speak, "My dear Elfrida," he began, "how have I put my foot into it? I am immensely anxious to know!" Nothing would put him off. Elfrida was no match for him; and though she was very unwilling to discuss the subject at all, he soon managed to worm out of her all the stories she had heard about you, and from whom she had heard them. All this she told him with a painful and embarrassed solemnity, as though she were touching pitch and were almost afraid of being defiled by it. And then when all was out, Lord Stonehouse leant forward in his chair, gave a slap to one of his fat knees, and burst into a chuckle of laughter. "That is too rich!" he exclaimed. "Upon my word, that is too rich!"

'Elfrida, at this, was perfectly dumb with astonishment and anger, and put on what Lord Stonehouse calls her "excommunicating face."

"My dear Elfrida," he said, "do tell me why you are looking so glum. You don't mean to say that you believe this cock-and-bull story, do you?"

'Elfrida told him stiffly that she had only too good grounds for believing it.

"What grounds?" said Lord Stonehouse. "The chattering of this fellow Inigo? If I hadn't thought you could

have taken his measure better I declare I would never have introduced him to you. He's nothing more than a pedlar of second-hand scandal and gossip, which he picks up and alters, and hopes will pass for new ; and then when he gets any one to stop and examine his wares—though no one does so except for the purpose of laughing at them—he imagines that he is mixing in society. Pooh ! All this about Carew—I can tell you exactly what the real facts are. Madame de Saint Valery has never seen him but once since he has been here, and that happened quite by accident. He was smoking his cigarette on the Promenade des Anglais, and she happened to be leaning over the balustrade of her garden. I have not the honour of knowing the good lady herself ; but a Russian acquaintance of mine, Prince Olgorouki, whose shoes our friend Inigo was under a kind of contract to lick, knows her exceedingly well ; and I heard of it all from him. He himself had heard it from Madame de Saint Valery ; and she, I believe, had spoken of it to him because she wanted to know where Carew was living, and was very much aggrieved at his not having been to call on her.”

‘At this moment Lady Chislehurst entered the room, and, hearing your name mentioned, insisted on learning what was being said about you. She knew that something had gone wrong, but was not quite sure what ; except that there had been an unpleasantness in connection with Foreman’s visit, and now for the first time she was told the whole truth of the matter. At once a discussion began about your intimacy with the lady in London, and your whole former acquaintance with her ; and Lady Chislehurst at once took up the cudgels for you—with excellent effect. She, as you know, has a wonderful knowledge of gossip ; in fact, with regard to any one who is suspected of Catholic leanings, she is a kind of epitomised Inquisition—I am bound to say, a most kind and charitable one. Though she is determined to know the worst, she always hopes for the best ; and she was able to tell Elfrida, with every air of

authority, that the worst about you in this connection was certainly not very bad.

‘As for Consuelo, I don’t know that I have anything special to add. I think it will be enough for you to be simply told that she too knows what her sisters know. She knows you have been judged wrongly.

‘Out of that intelligence I must leave you to make what you can or what you choose ; and I will only add that when next you meet the Burton family, if they are at first a little shy of you—I don’t know that they will be : I only say if they are—the only reason will be, not that they think you deserve ill of them, but that they feel they have acted unfairly and perhaps foolishly by you.

‘And now I am going to return to the subject of our own plans. In about ten days’ time we leave Rome, as I have already told you, for the Italian lakes ; and I will at last reveal to you that the mutual friends who are going with us are none other than the three Burtons, together with Lady Chislehurst and Mr. Stanley. It is just possible, too, that Lord Aiden may join us there, after he has paid a solitary visit to the Lake of Garda, and enjoyed on the peninsula of Catullus the tunes that his own mind will play to him. We shall probably ourselves make a number of expeditions, but our headquarters will be Baveno, just opposite your cousin’s island villa. Don’t let me put you to any trouble ; but if without trouble you can do so, you will, I am sure, send us an order for seeing it. I only wish there was any chance of your coming that way yourself. Happy man, with all these foreign relations ! Even Foreman will not be able to deprive you of every place of refuge at once.’

Carew felt, on laying down this letter, as if a sudden break had come in a sky of grey clouds, and a sun, whose existence had almost become incredible, were beginning to brighten through them. At once a change came over his whole mind. His power of resolution again began to assert itself ; and his plans for the future, up till now so

undecided, with a strange rapidity assumed a practical shape.

His altered condition might have been detected in his step when he rose from breakfast. He moved towards the library like a man with a definite purpose, and wrote letter after letter with an air of business-like rapidity. He then inquired for his sister, who had not been yet downstairs, and had presently a conversation with her as to her movements in the immediate future. What she told him he found perfectly satisfactory ; and his next step was to request an interview with the Squire. This was graciously granted ; and before the hour of luncheon it was known to the whole household that owing to some sudden news Carew would be leaving Otterton by dawn the following morning.

BOOK V

CHAPTER I.

THE PROMISED LAND.

IN a large pillared room, with an echoing painted ceiling, and a tessellated floor that shone with reflected statuary, a man was seated alone at a small table in the centre, having just finished his solitary evening meal. A pile of fruit which glowed and gleamed in the candle-light was lying untasted before him ; and sometimes his gaze would rest listlessly upon this, sometimes it would wander round the florid unhomely walls, whose friezes and medallions were now almost lost in shadow.

Presently rousing himself, he tinkled a silver hand-bell, and, whilst awaiting the coffee for which this was the signal, produced from his pocket a letter in a clear female hand, and, spreading it open before him, began to read, or rather to contemplate it. An expression of pained perplexity gathered on his face as he did so ; and at last, with a deep sigh, he abruptly rose from his seat and opened one of the windows.

Outside, a night palpitating with starlight and dewy with scents of flowers, revealed a balustraded terrace and tall classical vases. Beyond these, from a garden that lay below, masses of dark foliage just raised themselves into sight ; and again beyond these, between the tops of cypresses and oleander-blossoms, was the moonlight faint upon a lake that floated under a boundary of mountains.

The man, bare-headed, stepped out upon the terrace and inhaled the air as if it gave him a kind of comfort.

Then he moved to a spot at a short distance from the window, and fixed his eyes on the lights of some small town, that was visible from thence on the far side of the water, glimmering at the foot of the mountains like the sparks of a fallen rocket.

‘By this time,’ he exclaimed to himself, ‘they must be there, all of them—there amongst those lights. And I—how shall I meet them? To-morrow I shall be coming to the turning-point of my life—to the day, or the few days, that will give their character to years. How much, at times, hangs on the choice of a moment! How much, at times, on our making no choice at all! We say to ourselves with regard to some course of action, “We will think about it and call again,” as if we were speaking to a shopman; and when we do call again, the thing we might have chosen is gone. Never, never, never can we recall the wasted opportunity. We forget that life is a journey which can only be travelled once. There are no circular tours in it.’

The letter which he had been looking at indoors he still held in his hand, and he now crushed it with a sudden and painful contraction of his fingers: then for a moment he raised it and sorrowfully pressed it to his lips. A minute or two later he started as if he had come to a resolution. Returning to the dining-room, he again rang the bell, and, scribbling hastily a short note in pencil, confided it to a servant, with some brief directions and inquiries. Once more he sought his former station on the terrace; and folding his arms, he remained there staring motionless at the lake.

This man was Carew.

Five minutes elapsed, and not a sound broke the stillness; then there rose from below the whisper of dipping oars, and presently a boat, or rather a dim blot on the waters, was seen moving straight towards the cluster of lights opposite. An hour or so later it again became visible returning, and Carew was still on the terrace, at once watch-

ful and preoccupied. He waited there till he heard footsteps approaching, and directly after a letter was brought out to him—a letter which at once he hastened indoors to read.

‘My dear Carew,’ it ran, ‘you tell me that you are in some great perplexity. You want my advice, and you want it, you say, instantly—before the beginning of the probable meetings of to-morrow. As to those meetings you are certainly quite right, for by to-morrow afternoon the whole party will have assembled here—Lady Chislehurst, the three Miss Burtons, the Harleys, and Lord Aiden. The Harleys, indeed, are here already, and Mrs. Harley has duly informed the others that you hope to see and welcome them as soon as possible after their arrival. If, therefore, you wish to consult me about anything, I will be with you at breakfast—let us say at about nine o’clock. I think, a little later, you may expect Mrs. Harley, who has just had some singular news which she wishes herself to communicate to you.

‘So many of your perplexities have, I know, been cleared up, that I am a little at a loss to conjecture why you write so dejectedly. However, I can imagine that there may be a point or two as to which you may think me able to make you feel more at ease; and any hint or information which I may be able to give you, I shall give with the greatest pleasure, and hope it may prove useful to you. No doubt at present I am writing a little in the dark. Until the very day before I started from Rome, I had not a notion that you were not still at Courbon-Loubet, and now I find that you have been for weeks in England, and that you have suffered a loss for which, my dear Carew, you will know I feel deeper sympathy than can be expressed in a note like this.

‘Ever yours,

‘FREDERIC STANLEY.’

The following morning, by the time named in the letter,

Carew was standing at the landing-place watching for his friend's arrival. Before him a flight of crescent-shaped granite stairs dipped into the rippling water. Over him was a canopy of budding bankshia roses, and a marble satyr behind him glimmered through the leaves upon its pedestal. High in the background rose a series of artificial terraces, supported on walls and arches which were half-hidden by foliage—laurels, camellias, myrtles, oleanders, and cypresses. Here and there through valleys of flowers and verdure there were glimpses of urns and statues, and small fantastic temples, or the spray of a fountain floating like a tissue of white crape; and crowning all were the parapets and top-most windows of a palazzo.

Such was the place to which, acting on Mrs. Harley's suggestion, Carew had betaken himself directly after receiving her letter. Everything thus far had fallen out as he had hoped it would—everything at least which, at that juncture, he had reckoned upon. And yet his brow was clouded; it betrayed neither hope nor resolution; his air was as listless and anxious as it had been a week back at Otterton. The morning was bright everywhere except upon his face. Something or other he plainly had on his mind, and it was this which he was now waiting to unburden to Mr. Stanley.

Confession, whatever relief it may bring eventually, is rarely at the time a very delightful process, and Carew, when he saw Mr. Stanley's boat approaching, had an uneasy feeling as if he were about to submit himself to his dentist. Mr. Stanley's very first words, however, at once made him feel more comfortable. There was about them, as about his manner usually, a certain pleasant, half-humorous matter-of-factness which, when he was discussing any grave or delicate subject, put any awkwardness or false shame out of the question. No one, in fact, could approach a case of sentimental casuistry with more sympathy and with less sentimentality than he.

It was an inexpressible relief to Carew to see on the

priest's brow no annoying reflection of the cloud that obscured his own. It was an inexpressible relief to hear him, the moment he was landed, instead of attuning his voice to a note of anxious solicitude, declare that he was dying of hunger and could talk about nothing till he had breakfasted ; and then, as they went up to the house, falsify this statement by launching into exclamations of delight at the fairyland of gardens that burst upon him. They were presently seated at breakfast in a small carpetless room, that was gaily frescoed with shepherds, temples, and goddesses ; and a voluble parrot in a glittering gilded cage was making them smile with unexpected scraps of Italian. All these surroundings formed natural subject for conversation, and rapidly paved the way, without any effort or awkwardness, for that other subject which Carew was anxious to touch upon.

'No,' said Mr. Stanley, 'I was never here before ; nor, till a very few days ago, had I any notion that you were here. I thought, as I told you in my note, that you still were at Courbon-Loubet.'

'And I,' said Carew, 'till I got Mrs. Harley's letter, was equally ignorant as to the movements of all of my guests at the château—all except Foreman : I learnt quite enough about him.'

'I think,' said Mr. Stanley, smiling, 'you will learn something more to-day.'

'About Foreman ?' exclaimed Carew. 'What on earth have I to learn about Foreman ? And why do you laugh when you speak about him ? One would think there was some mystery.'

'Well,' said Mr. Stanley, 'if there is one, Mrs. Harley will reveal it to you. She has made me promise to leave that pleasure to her.'

'You know, I suppose,' said Carew, 'that she has revealed one mystery to me already ? You know that she wrote to me, don't you ? and what the things were that she explained to me ?'

‘Perfectly,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘perfectly ; and I was delighted to hear she had done so. Of course you refer to the mischief that was made by that good gentleman Inigo ; and I can well understand—or at least, my dear Carew, I think I can—all the annoyances which must have been suffered both by yourself and Miss Consuelo Burton.’

‘It was about that,’ said Carew, ‘that I wished to speak to you. When one meets one’s friends again after a certain rupture it is sometimes a little difficult to know exactly how one stands with them ; and a good deal depends on one’s understanding one’s position accurately.’

‘Well,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘with regard to the elder sisters, your position is just what it was when you last met them at Nice—or rather, you are higher in their favour. You must surely realise that, by their eagerness to come and visit you here. Your perplexity, surely, cannot refer to them.’

‘Not altogether,’ said Carew, ‘and yet partly. I am thinking how best to explain it.’

‘Let me,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘hazard the beginning of the explanation, and my guess, if wrong, will at any rate have been complimentary to yourself. You have had, if I am not mistaken, the fortunate penetration to discover the depth of character—one might almost call it the moral genius—of their young sister ; and you wish to know, after what has lately happened, in what frame of mind she is likely to meet you to-morrow. Is not that your meaning?’

‘More or less it is,’ said Carew doubtfully.

‘Then, in that case,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘I need only say about her the same thing that I said about her two elder sisters. She too will meet you as she met you last, before there had arisen any of this foolish misunderstanding. I’m afraid, however, that I am talking wide of the mark. Judging by your face, we are not on the right subject yet.’

‘We are not,’ said Carew, with some slight hesitation. ‘I am glad to hear what you tell me ; but it was not what I was most perplexed about. I didn’t so much want to ask

you anything about her feelings towards me, but as to her impression, and the impression formed by her sisters, as to my feelings towards her. I merely speak to you, my dear Stanley, as if you were a common observer : I do not want you to betray any confidences, in case her sisters should have spoken about the matter to you. Do you think that she—that Miss Consuelo Burton entertains the idea that I am—well—in any way seriously attracted by her?’

Mr. Stanley stared at Carew in astonishment. ‘Do you mean to say,’ he exclaimed, ‘that you can possibly doubt that?’

‘Once,’ said Carew, ‘I certainly did not doubt it. I mean in London. I felt sure then that she realised how I appreciated her. I thought, too, that she was growing to appreciate me. But,’ he continued wearily, ‘times change, people drift apart ; and it often seems to me almost as visionary to hope that such feelings in another would still remain and wait for one, as to hope to find to-morrow some cloud of yesterday’s sunset.’

‘My good friend,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘we are not talking at present about what the young lady feels for you, but about her natural conclusion as to your feelings for her. Let us leave London alone ; let us merely go back to Courbon-Loubet. I don’t know—so far as words go—how much or how little you may have said to her. I am referring merely to your whole manner and conduct there. If you did not yourself know what such conduct would seem to mean, one might almost imagine that you did not mean much by it. That, however, I don’t believe for a moment ; for were that true, one could hardly imagine a case of more barefaced and more deliberate trifling.’

‘You are right,’ said Carew, ‘in believing me not to have been trifling. The long and the short, then, of the matter is this : I produced the impression both on her and on others that I wished to marry her, and this wish they will still attribute to me. Is not that what you mean?’

‘Certainly,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘and it had never occurred to me that you could be in doubt about it.’

‘About what, then,’ said Carew, ‘did you think I wished to speak to you?’

‘To tell you the truth,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘I was a little puzzled to conjecture. I concluded, however, that, considering the complications which have occurred, you wished to know in what temper she would meet you. Her manner towards you was much less unequivocal than yours was towards her. I can easily conceive your being in some sort of perplexity, and what I gathered from your note was this—that you thought I might tell you something of how the land lay, and so spare you a little unnecessary embarrassment. Indeed if that was your meaning you were right. I certainly could, without violating any confidence, tell you certain things, which I think it would be well for you to know.’

As Mr. Stanley spoke Carew’s eyes brightened. ‘Tell me,’ he said. ‘Tell me whatever you can tell. Yes, it is this—what you speak of—it is this that I wished to consult you about. But what I had wished also, and what I had wished in the first place to have explained to you, was very much what you have already taken for granted.’

‘Explain it to me again,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘and explain it in your own way. If one is to give advice, you can never learn the circumstances too exactly.’

‘Well,’ said Carew, with an effort assuming a certain dryness of manner, ‘there is no need to indulge in the language of sentiment. It will be enough to state my case as if I were writing a Parliamentary Blue-book. I have come, then, to this conclusion with regard to my own life: I shall be more likely to make a good use of it—indeed, I shall be likely to do so only—if I can find a wife who understands my views and aspirations, who would help and encourage me in putting them into practice, and would redeem them from becoming what I fear they are now—so many useless sighs and so much waste of brain-tissue. So

far as my acquaintance extends—and amongst women this is pretty extensive—there is only one person who possesses, or even suggests, the necessary qualifications, and that person is Miss Consuelo Burton; and so important to myself do I consider the settlement of the matter, that I have come to this place for the express purpose of meeting her under favourable circumstances, and arriving at an understanding with her, either one way or the other. So far as she knows, my being here at the same time as herself and her party is nothing more than an accident. Mrs. Harley alone knows otherwise. I don't suppose, though you and she have discussed my affairs together, that she has told even you the real reason of my coming here—that I am here simply in consequence of the information she sent me.'

'No,' said Mr. Stanley. 'She has kept your secret perfectly. All these people conclude that you are here in the natural course of things, taking the lakes as a resting-place on your journey home. They have none of them, to my knowledge, even heard that you have been in England, though the deep mourning in which I grieve to see you will soon oblige them to know the fact. Of course,' he added, 'you got a letter from Miss Elfrida Burton? She wrote to you before leaving Rome.'

'I did,' said Carew, 'and a very kind, frank letter it was. So far as mere ease and pleasantness goes, this evening's meeting will be easy and pleasant enough. What I wanted to ask you as plainly as I decently could I have already asked you: I mean, whether I were distinctly looked upon as anxious to marry Miss Consuelo. That question you have answered. You have also told me that you could tell me something as to what my prospects in that direction were. You said as much as that, didn't you?'

'We have finished breakfast,' said Mr. Stanley. 'Would you mind our coming into the garden? What I have to tell you I can tell you as we are strolling about.'

They did as Mr. Stanley suggested, and for some

minutes they both found a relief in suspending their personal conversation and indulging themselves in the enjoyment of the morning.

By-and-by Mr. Stanley began again. 'I cannot,' he said, 'give you a very definite answer with regard to the point you spoke of; not because I am bound to keep secret any special fact that I know, but simply because I have no certain knowledge. If you want a definite answer, you must get that from herself. Still, as I said just now, I have one or two things to tell you which may possibly help to guide you. In the first place, I am glad you have given me this opportunity of expressing the admiration I feel for this girl's singular character, which is still more singular when considered in its relation to your own. What your interests are, my dear Carew—at least, your higher interests—nobody knows better than I. I think, too, that you are perfectly right in your distrust of your own practical resolution. But your instinctive sympathies, and the instinctive bent of your intellect, constantly connect you, as if by a kind of fate, with the special social problems of the present and the near future. In this way she is almost your exact counterpart.'

'You think that?' said Carew. 'That is your real opinion?'

'It is,' said Mr. Stanley. 'I don't want to indulge in any exaggeration, though this beautiful garden is suggestive of poetry; I would much rather imitate you and talk like a Blue-book; but I must say that Miss Consuelo Burton in many respects reminds me of Saint Theresa. It is the same kind of nature; but, so far as I am able to tell, it is quite without the true monastic vocation. However, I can't speak for certain, and there will lie your difficulty.'

'What!' said Carew, 'does she think of entering a convent?'

'I believe,' said Mr. Stanley, 'that her thoughts are tending in that direction, though they would certainly not lead her to take the veil at once.' He paused, and a

moment later resumed. 'What is special about her, to my mind, is this. Other women, in numbers, have devoted themselves to the service of the poor; but she not only shares the impulse which produces this immemorial devotion: she has realised, in the keenest and most practicable way imaginable, the special conditions which distinguish our own epoch, and which present an old duty under a new form. It is not often that the keenness and coolness of masculine logic are united to the passionate sympathy of feminine intuition; but they are in her. To you a marriage with her would be of incalculable benefit. I am speaking quite calmly, not as the confidant of a lover, but as a kind of moral politician.'

'What,' said Carew, laughing, 'is the good of telling me that, when in the same breath you tell me that, at present, her dearest hope is to renounce marriage with any one?'

'She is not decided,' said Mr. Stanley. 'Perhaps you might help to decide her. I must tell you, too, that the ideas she connects with a cloister are very different from those of an ordinary would-be nun. Quite apart from any personal interest in her, you will find much in them that is suggestive, and well worthy of thought—especially as they are largely due to her visit to you at Courbon-Loubet.'

'You speak in riddles,' said Carew.

'They are riddles,' said Mr. Stanley, 'which she will be able to answer; and Lady Chislehurst, you may be sure, will insist on her doing so. She is longing that the matter should be fully explained to you.'

'What!' said Carew. 'This is a very odd state of affairs. A girl's private reasons for wishing to enter a cloister are not usually the subject of her general conversation with her friends.'

'You don't understand,' said Mr. Stanley, 'but a couple of days will make you, and perhaps this evening will. Anyhow, Lady Chislehurst won't let the subject sleep. You recollect Miss Consuelo's eagerness—don't you?—when she was staying at the château, about Foreman's Socialistic

theories. She at once realised that, alone of all reformers, the Socialists had gone straight to the root of the social difficulty. She also realised that, having once got at the root, there their wisdom ended, and they utterly failed to see what this root was made of.'

'Or rather,' said Carew, 'it was you who pointed that out to her. The root, you said—with a most happy illustration—was simply human nature. You said that the same causes would prevent our turning a country into a Socialistic commonwealth that would prevent our turning it into a Trappist monastery.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Stanley, 'but I used the illustration without realising at the moment how accurate and apposite it was. Miss Consuelo Burton understood it instantly, and read a meaning into it beyond what I had put there. She saw——'

'Saw what?' said Carew. 'What is it you are looking at?'

'Look,' said Mr. Stanley, 'who's that in the boat below us? It surely is Mrs. Harley.'

'It is,' said Carew, 'and she is waving her parasol at us. We must go down and meet her.'

'And now,' said Mr. Stanley, 'be prepared for a piece of news. What I began to tell you will keep.'

CHAPTER II.

ON THE BRINK OF JORDAN.

CAREW'S face during the whole of the late conversation, though sometimes it had lit up with interest, had never lost its fixed air of anxiety, nor, if he had meant to unburden himself of some secret trouble, did he exhibit thus far the least sign that he had done so. The moment, however, he met Mrs. Harley and gave her a hand to help her from the boat to the landing-steps, his eyes brightened and his lips wore a happier smile. Nor, indeed, was this unnatural.

Mrs. Harley's face, always brilliant with quick thought and expression, was now prophetic of something so eminently delightful that a sense of expectant humour must have been awakened in all who looked at her.

When the first greetings were over and they were proceeding up to the house, 'I have come,' she said, 'with a piece of special news for you, and I only hope it has not reached you before me.'

Carew said it had not.

'Because,' Mrs. Harley continued, 'it is here—in these newspapers,' and she tapped with a rough brown glove a copy of the *Morning Post* that was blushing under her red umbrella. 'Let us sit down somewhere, and then you shall hear the secret.'

Carew led the way to a huge shady portico that just eluded the dazzling glare of the sunlight, and as soon as they had seated themselves Mrs. Harley unfolded her papers. Whilst she was looking for the passages she wanted, the others kept perfect silence.

'Listen,' at last she said—'listen to this letter. It is addressed to the editor of the *Morning Post*, and is dated from a club which you, Mr. Carew, belong to, in St. James's Street.

“SIR,—As an eye-witness of the recent disgraceful riots, I must beg your permission to say a few words. Letters have appeared in all the most influential journals urging that the Government should at once prosecute the ringleaders, in especial the notorious Foreman. At the same time, it has been represented in other quarters that such a prosecution would be futile and unadvisable, either because Foreman and his associates were not really to blame, or else because it would be impossible to bring their guilt home to them. Whether these latter suggestions emanate from those who fear or from those who sympathise with the miscreants, I do not pretend to decide ; but I ask you to give publicity to the following facts. I and five or

six other gentlemen of the most distinguished social position are prepared to offer evidence so explicit and circumstantial that, were none else forthcoming, it alone would be sufficient to convict Foreman of everything he has popularly been charged with. The riot was practically his creation. It is said to have been planned by him. As to that I naturally know nothing, not being in the habit of associating with agitators and revolutionists. But I do know that it was deliberately led and deliberately directed by him. One event—in itself sufficiently uninteresting—has become known to the public : that he was turned out of a certain University Club which he belonged to owing to his having publicly advocated the murder of a Cabinet Minister ; and this club is opposite that from which I am writing. As the rioters were advancing up St. James's Street, Foreman ordered a halt directly in front of these windows. I watched the event myself, and heard every word he uttered. I saw him point to the club from which he had himself been ejected, and with violent gesticulations, and expressions of the wildest hatred, urged the attack on it which almost immediately followed. We, who are connected with no political party, and whose only sin is the name of being dandies and fashionable exclusives, were meanwhile allowed the benefit of our obscurity. By accident, however, Foreman caught sight of a group of us, whom it is not impossible he knew well by appearance, as three of us were personages of the very highest rank and distinction ; and at once, with an almost maniacal fury, he began to direct the attention of his followers to us, signalling out my unworthy self in particular, and calling for eggs and other disgusting missiles. We had done nothing to irritate the mob—nothing even to attract their attention. If we had not been signalled out by the knowledge and malice of this one man as representatives of the aristocratic classes, we should not have been so much as noticed. I may also add that the attention and ferocity of the mob could not possibly have been directed towards us so rapidly had Foreman not had about

him a large and trained contingent from his League of Social Democrats, which embraces, in all probability, some of the most notorious thieves in London. Only let the Government have courage to bring this miscreant to his trial, and I can promise for myself and for my friends that the case for the Crown shall not fail for lack of conclusive and circumstantial evidence. I have the honour to remain, sir, your obedient servant, ——." 'Then,' said Mrs. Harley, 'follows his name, and after that comes a postscript :—

"P.S.—It only remains for me to add that I shall be much astonished if this infamous League be not pronounced to be an illegal society ; and also that the man Foreman, if he be not found to merit penal servitude, will only escape that from being found more fit for an asylum. Little as one is in the way of hearing anything about the private lives of such people, reports are afloat that he is well known by his friends to be subject in private matters to the most extraordinary hallucinations."

'Now who should you think,' said Mrs. Harley, 'is the author of that letter? It is none other than our good friend Mr. Inigo—"Your obedient servant, Geoffry Inigo."'

'I knew it!' said Carew with a laugh of real amusement ; and then as the laugh died his look of sadness returned to him.

'Wait a bit,' said Mrs. Harley. 'That is not all. We have not yet come to the part that concerns yourself.'

'Concerns me !' said Carew. 'What has all this to do with me?'

'Listen,' said Mrs. Harley, 'and you will very soon see. I have read you one letter ; I will now read you another.'

Carew looked, and saw that she now had in her hand a second newspaper, of a different appearance from the first, which he recognised in another moment as the organ of sensational Radicalism.

'This,' said Mrs. Harley, 'is addressed to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Listen to it.

"Sir,—A letter has appeared lately in the columns of

the *Morning Post*, from a certain Mr. Geoffry Inigo, containing a series of false and libellous statements respecting my conduct during the recent regrettable disturbances. I wrote a letter in reply to it to the same journal, which the editor—with what fairness I leave you to judge—has flatly declined to publish. I must beg you, sir, therefore, as a matter of common justice, to give publicity to the following plain statements, for the truth of which I am not only prepared to vouch, but absolute proofs of which I am enclosing herewith to you.

“The value of Mr. Inigo’s testimony in general may be estimated by what I have to say about it with regard to the two following points.

“In the first place, he gives us to understand that he is a representative of the aristocracy and the world of fashion. As to the world of fashion I will not presume to speak. It is impossible to say what may not fitly represent *it*. But as to his claims to aristocracy, beyond the fact that he was standing with some Lords and Honourables in a window, his only claims are these. His father was a grocer, in a small way of business in Shrewsbury, and his mother had been cook-housekeeper to a rich attorney in the neighbourhood. Her maiden name was Jane Jennings, and she died in the August of 1868.

“In the second place, he calls the League of Social Democrats an infamous society, and declares that the law could not hesitate to pronounce it illegal. It may surprise the public to learn—but it is nevertheless quite true—that this same Mr. Inigo has been for the past ten years the largest and most constant of our contributors to the funds of that very society. If he is inclined to deny this, copies of his cheques can be produced in evidence.

“I can easily imagine that as to this point at least your readers may incline to be sceptical. But the following facts will make what I have said intelligible.

“This so-called Mr. Inigo is not Mr. Inigo at all. Inigo is, indeed, one of his Christian names, but his real

surname is Foreman. He is, in fact, my own half-brother—the child of my father by his first wife.

“The one thing he dreaded most in the world was any exposure of his parentage ; and having quarrelled with me for my indifference to fashionable ambition, he subsequently began to suspect that I should claim him as a relative, and so bring disgrace upon him. This idea was entirely his own. It had never entered into my head. But some ten years ago he came to me of his own accord, and told me that, my opinions being so and so, and my conduct being so and so, it would be a serious disadvantage to him were his relationship to me known ; and he asked me on what terms I would consent to keep it secret. I at once saw my way to a good thing, and told him that I would hold my peace on condition of his subscribing two hundred pounds annually to the League of Social Democrats. His subscription, which till now has been paid punctually, was due this day a week ago—the day after the riots—riots which I regret as much as any man, and in which he himself was a slight and accidental sufferer. But no subscription was forthcoming. I wrote to him, and reminded him of the matter, at the same time assuring him that the ill-usage he had received was not designed for a moment to do him serious injury, and expressed neither hatred nor anger on the part of the mob, but simply a supreme and almost good-humoured contempt. Still I received no answer ; but instead of an answer to myself, I saw in the *Morning Post* the libellous letter which has prompted me now to address you, hoping that the public will gather from our only circumstantial accuser what is really the trustworthiness of the accusation.

“I am, sir, yours faithfully,

“JOSIAH FOREMAN.

“Office of the League of Social Democrats,
Palace Chambers, Westminster.”

‘There !’ exclaimed Mrs. Harley, ‘and what do you think of that ? Do you see now how the correspondence affects you ? Mr. Inigo imagined that you had somehow

divined his secret, and was terribly afraid that you would whisper it to some of your friends. Do you recollect the night at Nice when he came in after dinner, and you by accident mentioned Foreman's name to him? Did you see the look he gave you, and the odd change that came over his manner? At the time we none of us could make out what it meant.'

'Yes,' said Carew, 'I recollect it well. God bless my soul! this is really too ridiculous. Don't speak to me for a moment. Let me lean back quietly and be amused at it. My dear Mrs. Harley,' he went on presently, 'it's worth while to have suffered a little annoyance merely to have arrived at so delightful an explanation of it. Of course—of course, everything fits in like the parts of a child's puzzle. If Inigo suspected what you say he suspected at Nice, Foreman's presence at Courbon-Loubet must, of course, have confirmed his suspicions.'

'Of course,' said Mrs. Harley; 'I know it all for a fact. I've just had a letter from Foreman's wife, who tells me about it. Poor woman—for her I am really sorry. She fully believes that her husband will really be imprisoned, and she knows—for it is quite true about his having a touch of madness—that if he only is sentenced to solitary confinement, he will, as Mr. Inigo insinuates, have to march out of his cell into a madhouse. Foreman himself, too, is in a state of most abject terror, as you can see by that letter, which he would never have written if in his senses—terror for his own safety, and rage against Mr. Inigo. Mr. Inigo is the one person for whom I have no manner of pity. Of course it's all very well for us to laugh now; but a man with that spiteful tongue might easily do permanent mischief—and it's no thanks to him that in this case he hasn't.'

These last words produced a curious change on Carew. The laughter and animation which he had till now exhibited suddenly left his face, and his former look of dejection came over it like nightfall.

At length rousing himself, he said in a mechanical way, 'And where are Lady Chislehurst and the others? Have they arrived yet at Baveno?'

'Lady Chislehurst,' said Mrs. Harley, 'arrived just before I was starting—and with her a Catholic bishop and two atheistic professors—one of them no less a person than the great Mr. Humbert Spender. The Burtons are due at two in the afternoon, and Lord Aiden an hour or two later. I hope you fully realise that you have asked us all to dinner to-night, and Lady Chislehurst begs me to tell you to remember that this will constitute a second meeting of your Society.'

'My dear Carew,' Mr. Stanley here interposed, 'do you know how time has been passing? I must be going back to Baveno.'

Carew turned to him with a look of blank disappointment, and begged him to stay longer. Mr. Stanley, however, said this was impossible; and Mrs. Harley, who declared herself to be equally pressed for time, said she would return in the same boat with Mr. Stanley.

'Well,' said Carew, 'come as early as you can this evening, that we may walk about and look at the place before dinner. Stanley,' he added in a low tone to the priest, 'you have not finished what you began to tell me.'

'Never mind,' said Mr. Stanley, 'you will hear all about it to-night, or some time to-morrow at the farthest.'

CHAPTER III.

UNABLE TO CROSS OVER.

CAREW passed the rest of the day miserably, in dull dejection varied by feverish excitement, till late in the afternoon, when his guests duly made their appearance—the three Burtons, the Harleys, Mr. Stanley, Lord Aiden,

and Lady Chislehurst. The meeting was to Carew a surprise from its unmixed pleasantness. Lady Chislehurst was more benignant than ever ; and as to the elder Miss Burtons, their frank and half-childish laughter as he came forward to meet them put him at his ease in a way which he had never ventured to hope for. Not only did they make him feel no new embarrassment, but he found that the little thunderstorm which had now so happily spent itself had cleared the air of anything that had formerly marred their intercourse.

Nor did Miss Consuelo make matters much more difficult for him. There was a little tremor in her manner and a little blush when he first met her at the landing-place and helped her out of the boat ; but whether or no she was really fit for a convent, she had at any rate so much of the knowledge and graceful dignity of the world, that if she felt any awkwardness she was perfectly able to hide it, and to do what so often only women of the world can do—give her eyes and manner the easy frankness of her feelings.

The evening was clear and balmy ; the spirit of spring breathed everywhere, and so long as the daylight lasted, melting by luminous stages into transparent dimness, they wandered about the garden, and through the great rooms of the palazzo, examining and discussing whatever happened to strike them, out-of-doors or within, from the landscape to pictures and furniture, and promising themselves a clearer view of all the beauties and curiosities to-morrow.

Just before dinner Mr. Stanley said to Carew, ‘Don’t try this evening to turn the conversation to that particular topic which we left unfinished this morning. Miss Consuelo Burton would be only annoyed by your doing so. If she has a fault, it is too keen a sense of the ridiculous ; and she said to me, only the last time I talked to her, that she dreaded nothing more than appearing like a woman with a hobby—a female bagman who travelled with one idea—an intellectual monkey who performed one particular trick. To-morrow night, no doubt, we shall hear something of her

—well, of her scheme, her plan, her notion—whatever we like to call it ; indeed, you may trust Lady Chislehurst for having it well ventilated. But to-night let us be less ambitious. Let the conversation take its course.'

Carew yielded to this advice with the relief often experienced in putting off what is serious ; and he did this with all the more readiness on hearing Lady Chislehurst, true to the character given of her, declare that next day must be a regular *réunion* of their Society, and that, fresh from Rome as they were, there would be no lack of things to talk about. 'I wish,' she added, 'the Bishop would be one of us : and Professor Spender, who is, I believe, the most famous of living scientific philosophers—if we made him an honorary member for an evening, who knows that it might not prove to be a means of grace to him?'

This latter suggestion was not taken up by anybody, and the conversation presently lapsed into a pleasant and careless babble, consisting mainly of an interchange of news and impressions from Rome, from London, and Lake Garda, with occasional allusions to the late riots at home, and the ominous destitution that was spreading amongst the industrial classes. To-night, however, these last were allusions only, and were little more than the shadow of the skeleton at a feast, which was animated mainly by a spirit of expectation and rest.

When the diners had sat down there had still been colour in the west—a luminous liquid saffron ; but when they rose the face of nature was changed. The stars were out, and the moon was about to rise. Something was said by one of the company about returning, and Carew was addressed on the subject of boats and boatmen. He, however, refused to listen to this.

'It is quite early yet,' he said. 'You can be in no hurry to get back ; and if you won't feel cold—and you won't, for the night is as warm as summer—I propose to take you for a little row on the lake. I've arranged everything, and I'm quite sure you will be enchanted.'

The proposal was so pleasant that he had no need to press it ; and all the party being well provided with wraps, and the boat being commodious and comfortable, and well manned with rowers, they felt, as they glided out into the soft gloom, in no hurry to bring the expedition to an end. Presently something occurred which made this opinion grow on them. They had not gone more than a few hundred yards from the island when they saw another boat coming slowly towards them, like an object moving in a dream. Suddenly there arose from it a tinkling sound of music—of a guitar or mandolin struck by a practised hand ; then there joined in some other stringed instruments, performing a kind of prelude ; and at last came the melody of a rich Italian voice, singing a song half reckless and half tender, the burden of which, at the end of every verse, was taken up by other voices in chorus. All the party exclaimed with delight at this gliding and mysterious orchestra, which now suffered them to approach near to it, and would then elude them and float away into the distance, leaving its music like a vanishing wake behind it. Carew was beset with inquiries as to who the performers could be ; and at first replied, laughing, that the lake was ‘full of noises,’ like Prospero’s Island. But he at last admitted that he had planned the entertainment himself, and that the performers were a small troupe—two of them Neapolitans—who happened then to be in the neighbourhood. The music passed from one tune to another with a fairy-like succession of changes, seeming, as if by some magic, to be luring on the boat that followed it ; and it kept ahead of them all the way, till the clocks on shore were heard striking eleven, and the party found themselves making for the lights of Baveno.

All were loud in their thanks to Carew, and were regretting that the expedition was so very nearly over, when a cry of ‘Listen !’ from one or two of them again called attention to the music. Carew, in particular, became suddenly silent, as if the sound had mesmerised him.

‘That song!’ exclaimed Lady Chislehurst. ‘How well I know it! It is a hymn the Neapolitan fishermen sing to Our Lady in the evening.’

Carew had recognised this fact already. It was the first song he had heard Miss Capel sing.

The whole evening, till this last moment, had been of unexpected, of almost bewildering pleasure to him. He had neither had, nor tried to have, any intimate conversation with Miss Consuelo Burton. He had been content to give these hours to the natural healing of their friendship, leaving what was more than friendship to assert itself during the days that would follow. But he had been meanwhile observing, with admiring and minute observation, her graces of manner and movement, and even the little niceties of her dress and the arrangement of her hair. He had been observing this, and connecting it mentally with his knowledge of what solemn and serious things those eyes could look upon which flashed so brightly under that dainty fringe of hair, and how all the gravest hopes and sorrows of life had agitated the breast which was hidden by that pretty Parisian jacket.

But now this song, floating mysteriously across the water, suddenly stirred thoughts alike in his heart and conscience which for some time had been lying soundless and tranquil, and made them move and murmur as a wind makes fallen leaves. He said good-night to his friends sadly and absently; he arranged for their return to the island next day, as if he hardly knew what words he was uttering, and when he was rowed back alone in the now silent boat he had the air of a man who had lost rather than found a treasure.

‘Coward that I was!’ he exclaimed. ‘Stanley might have helped and advised me; but I could not find courage to tell him the only thing which in any serious way made any advice necessary!’

CHAPTER IV.

A PRISONER OF THE PAST.

THE following morning he awoke with a dull sense of apprehension ; and as soon as he had time to recollect the cause of it he discovered it to be this. He wished to have the whole of the day till the evening absolutely alone ; he feared to be broken in upon by an early arrival of his friends, and he could not remember in the least at what hour he had said he would expect them.

Springing out of bed, he wrote a letter to Mrs. Harley, and despatched it at once by boat, to say that important business had unexpectedly called him away, and that he would not be back to receive them till close upon five o'clock.

'Yes,' he murmured to himself as he sealed the envelope, 'it *is* important, and it was utterly unexpected !'

The day was not far advanced before, acting under an impulse very similar to that which at Courbon-Loubet had driven him on his pilgrimage to St. Paul du Var, he was gliding slowly towards a distant quarter of the lake, under the congenial conduct of a dumb Italian boatman.

A jutting ridge of mountains shut him presently out of sight of Baveno, and as soon as the glitter of the last white house was invisible, with the air of a man who at length finds himself in private he drew from his pocket a crumpled sheet of paper. It was the letter which two nights ago he had been pondering over during his solitary dinner. Again he re-read it, lingering over every word. It ran thus :—

'I wonder if you will think it wrong of me to write to you as I am going to write. I wonder if you will think it immodest, unwomanly. Some people like women better for being like that ; I don't know if you do. I don't know what you will think of me. I might almost say that I do not care ; for when a person is in a position like mine, after

all, what does anything matter? Do you see what I have come to? Do you see what you have brought me to?

‘But it is not you only; and oh! I do not mean to reproach you. It is nothing new that you have done that fills me with this mad longing to write to you. No; it is something else. It is this—how shall I put it?’

‘It is coming upon me—you know what I mean—sooner than I expected. This suddenness is terrible; and till it came so near I don’t think I could have realised—indeed I am sure I did not—what it would be like.

‘*He* comes to-morrow; and in ten days we are to be married. To-morrow!—and after that all my life will be behind me.

‘I cannot, I will not—no, at least I will stop at that—I will not write to you one word when he is here. It is treachery, of course, to do so now, but it would be doubly treacherous to do so then, when, the moment after I had sent away all my thoughts to you, I should be obliged to pretend that they were still in my eyes for him. A woman may become bad; but that kind of constant deceit and falsehood—never!—oh, not that!

‘Perhaps it will bore you, hearing me tell you what I feel for you. Men do get bored if a woman once admits she is fond of them. But never mind; I am a long way off, and you can tear my letter up as soon as you have had enough of it. But you ought to forgive me, for it is yourself whom you have to thank for this—for all this I am inflicting on you. You taught me to do what I am doing now. Do you remember those verses you sent me, in which you said you

Would never wholly leave me, till betwixt
My life and yours there is the great gulf fixt?

And till then I don’t mean to do so. But, do not be frightened when I say I will not leave you till then; for that “*then*” is to-morrow.

‘Oh, once more—since it will be once more only—let

me feel that my arms are about your neck—that I am holding you—that I know that you are there, and that I am telling you in your own ear, hiding my eyes against you as I do so, how everything in me fit to be called love has been yours, and is yours still, and how, when it may not belong to you any longer, it will never belong to any one.

‘I don’t believe that you understand this at all—no, no, not one small bit. How should you? This is the sort of thing that a man never understands. It is simply the old story. You will go away, and forget, and find some one else. Your having known me will not alter your life in any way; but mine will never—no, never—be the same again. You have shown me what happiness might be; you have taught me to know the taste of it; and, as I cannot ever have that happiness for my own, I shall never now be content with what once perhaps might have contented me. That is all. As I tell you, it is a very simple story; and I don’t complain.

‘Complain! I should think not. Oh, my—I don’t care to call you what I should like to call you—do not be angry with me for writing to you like this, for it was you who made me love you; and do not pity me too much. I do not mean to give way and be dismal. I suppose even, though I say that I shall never be happy again, that in the years to come I shall try to clutch at happiness, or what at the moment seems like it; and perhaps one day I may succeed in forgetting you by making myself no longer fit to remember you. But if I do that, I would sooner you never heard of my having done so, and that you never thought about me again.

‘Good-bye! good-bye!—how much that word means now!—and believe that though I shall never be yours at all, the one wish of my heart is that it had been possible for me to be

‘Yours always,

‘VIOLET.’

To this was added a postscript on another piece of paper, dated the following day :—

‘I had meant to have told you not to send me any answer. But you may now. I have heard from him again this morning. It is put off for another three whole weeks. He is kept in Paris by business. A line from you, if you will write to me, will be the one good thing this reprieve can bring me. Except for that, it will be merely a prolongation of intense suspense and suffering.’

Carew had arrived at the Island, now a few days back, full of hope and confidence. His future at last seemed to be shaping itself in a way that promised to satisfy every need and aspiration that had ever made him respect himself. But he had not been there for four-and-twenty hours before this letter had reached him, having dogged his path from England. The moment he read it it filled him with a disquiet and perplexity for which when at Otterton he had never bargained. Its chief effect was to stimulate not so much his affection as his conscience. His relations with Miss Capel were placed in a new light by it. He had always believed she was in some measure attracted by him : but his belief in this attraction, or rather the extent to which he realised it, obeyed a law which is very far from being singular. He understood her heart entirely by the light of his own. It was only the glow of his own feeling that rendered the signs of her feeling visible to him ; and in proportion as his feelings grew sober about her, hers about him—her feelings and her whole position—gradually passed away out of the grasp of his imagination. The result with him was a mental state much more common than many people would like to acknowledge, in which the only moral problem the disposal of his affections presented to him was what would harmonise best with the needs of his own best nature, not what he owed to the needs which he possibly might have awakened in hers.

Accordingly, when he found, as he had found, that another and not Miss Capel was the woman fittest to

complete and redeem his life, the one difficulty which he realised as obstructing his path was simply what lingering tenderness Miss Capel might still excite in himself. She was not a claimant to be met, but a temptress to be set aside.

Thus the above letter came like a moral shock to him, and his conscience suddenly roused itself into a state of abnormal activity, which might perhaps seem even greater than such a stimulus could explain, unless account is taken of his state of mind at the time. The letter reached him just at the very crisis when, full of serious, high, and determined thoughts, he was preparing to offer himself to Miss Consuelo Burton. To him, in such an offering, there was something almost sacramental—over and above what constitutes the ordinary sacramentality of marriage. He would, if he married her, be not only offering his faithful companionship to a sympathetic woman: he would be offering her life and his to some great Cause as well. Here was a sacrament and a sacrifice the very desire for which sprang direct out of the highest needs of his nature: and the mere act of contemplating it made his conscience sensitive—sensitive to an almost morbid degree. For this reason Miss Capel's letter touched him with a keenness that might have been wanting otherwise: and he sorrowfully seemed to himself like a double traitor—a traitor to her, and Miss Consuelo Burton also. If he offered himself to the latter, he would have to confess to her that his heart since their parting had been possessed by another image. That indeed might be forgiven him, and the offer of his heart be accepted, could his confession end there. But he would have to confess also—for he felt now that candour was the one virtue open to him—he would have to confess also that in seeking Miss Consuelo Burton he was seeking his own salvation at the price of another's ruin. He would have to confess to her that, if he knelt with her at the altar, hoping that, with her to guide him, he might find heaven and happiness, the thought of another bride would neces-

sarily come across him, to whom, partly through his conduct, the altar would mean nothing but despair.

Such were the thoughts, such were the feelings, which he had made up his mind to confide to Mr. Stanley, and which, when the time came, he had found himself unable even to touch upon. Mrs. Harley's news about Mr. Inigo, and the subsequent arrival of his other friends, had for the time distracted him, and allowed him to forget his troubles ; but the song so unexpectedly sung by his own musicians on the lake had not only reawakened the voice of his importunate conscience : it had once again vivified his own longing for Miss Capel. This longing, it is true, was more under control than formerly, and it did not efface for a moment the image of Miss Consuelo Burton. But it filled his being with painful and humiliating discord. It came back to him like a distant smell of firwoods : it came back to him like a voice from a lost Paradise : and though he felt he should be able to master it if necessary, he fully realised that it would cost him some effort to do so.

Such had been his condition last night ; such was his condition now as he lay under the awnings at the stern of his lazily moving boat which his dumb boatman was directing on a course he had already indicated.

All of a sudden he raised himself from a reclining position, and, sitting up, looked round him. He was not more than a hundred yards from shore, and was slowly rounding a headland covered with luxuriant gardens. The gardens feathered down close to the water's edge, their dense foliage sprinkled with white laurel-blossom and buoyant flower-tufts of the lilac-trees. Here and there peeped out an angle of some glimmering villa, and the waves below were gleaming along a succession of granite landing-steps. Presently one villa of more pretension than the others became visible, showing to the lake the whole of its unveiled façade. A trim parterre was in front of it, ornamented with statues and cool with a splashing fountain. Gay blinds sheltered the open windows ; and at some of these could be

seen the flicker of a transparent curtain. The whole place had somehow an air about it of wealth and refinement, and struck the imagination as a bower of luxurious quiet.

Carew fixed his eye on it, lost in a reverie. He then wrote in Italian, on the back of an envelope, the following question, which he handed to his mute attendant: 'Who lives now in the villa which was occupied two years ago by the Comtesse de Saint Valery?'

The man, who was well accustomed to this means of communication, replied that he did not know, as the present occupant had arrived but a few days ago; and he added a sentence, whose meaning he emphasised by a gesture, to the effect that they now were at the precise place where the Comtesse had once saved the life of a drowning child.

To Carew this was no news. His mind had gone back to the well-remembered scene already—to his first meeting with that beautiful and unfortunate woman, half shallow in her nature and half noble, made now reckless and now selfish by passion. He seemed to see her again as clearly as though she were really present, dripping with water as he drew her into his own boat, and turning to him a face which now had a new meaning for him: for in that remembered face he now saw an image of Miss Capel, with all the charm in it of which Miss Capel could never divest herself, and all the daring frailty which Miss Capel might ever develop. Little had he thought then how the acquaintance he was making would prove one day the source of the worst of his life's troubles. Silently, moodily, yet with a touch of embittered pleasure, he brooded over the past, which the place and the scene recalled to him; and when he roused himself and signed that he wished to be returning to the Island, the hard facts of the present seemed harder and more miserable than ever. His friends whom he was about to welcome he would be welcoming under false pretences. Taken as a group, they represented to his imagination a paradise which he was about to enter, but to enter as an alien only, and in which he never could have either part or lot.

CHAPTER V.

A GUIDE THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

CAREW's friends were at the Island before him, so he had no time on arriving for making a moral toilette, but was obliged as best he could to pull himself together at the moment. Lady Chislehurst did much to make this operation easy, for the simple reason that she instantly made it necessary. She was full of news of the most various and interesting kinds. She had been sitting half the afternoon with her bishop and her two atheistic philosophers; and she had herself been tendering much practical instruction to the former, and hearing him in turn make argumentative mincemeat of the latter. In addition to this, the newspapers of the day were full of alarming accounts from the United States and from Belgium. The late riots in London had acted as a signal to the revolutionary labour party all over the world. On the great American railways the traffic had been totally suspended; in Belgian towns and villages factories had been burnt to ashes. Strikes, with a threatening of armed rebellion in the background, seemed to be everywhere spreading themselves with the rapidity of some terrible conflagration.

His thoughts being hurried away by these practical matters, Carew was able for the time to forget his private perplexities, and he entered into the conversation with as much interest as usual, till at last these impersonal subjects took gradually a personal colouring.

'I can't say,' murmured Lord Aiden at dinner, 'that I myself am at all a prey to panic.'

'But at any rate,' Mrs. Harley retorted, 'you must be a prey to pity. These strikers and rioters may very likely be mad, but it is a kind of madness that is mainly produced by misery.'

‘No doubt,’ said Lord Aiden, ‘the present is a period of distress. These economic diseases of the modern world are very much what the plague was to the Middle Ages, and are as little to be cured by revolution or agitation.’

‘No,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘but their recurrence may perhaps be prevented—just, Lord Aiden, as that of the plague has been—by some gradual change in the social condition of the people.’

‘I doubt,’ said Mr. Stanley, sadly, ‘if it is good to be too sanguine. It is true, as you say, that the plague has ceased to visit us ; we have also protected ourselves more or less against the ravages of smallpox. But are we protected against disease in general? Do we see our way to dispensing with either doctors or hospitals? To me, I must say, it seems utterly visionary to expect a time when economic distress shall be impossible ; and the true point to which we should direct our endeavours is the care and relief of sufferers rather than the extinction of suffering. The highest thing for the practical man to aim at is the best that is practicable, not the best that is imaginable. For the politician, as the politician, there are no counsels of perfection.’

‘Precisely,’ exclaimed Lady Chislehurst. ‘Now there’s a bit of wisdom—I wish, Mrs. Harley, you would realise this fact—which is Catholic all over. The Catholic Church indulges in no illusions. It produces saints, but it knows that its chief work is with sinners, and will be so till the end of the world comes.’

‘And we think,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘I think, and Consuelo thinks—that the way to get at the sinners is to get at the outer circumstances that make half of the world’s sins inevitable. Consuelo, may I tell Lady Chislehurst what you said to me this morning? I am sure you have the courage of your opinions.’

The two elder Miss Burtons looked towards their sister with an odd mixture of affectionate wonder and anxiety as she quietly said, ‘You may.’

‘Well,’ said Lady Chislehurst, gracious but inquisitorial, ‘what was it?’

‘It was this,’ said Mrs. Harley—‘I don’t know whether it will shock you. She said that a home which a decent man can respect has as much to do with holiness as have all the Seven Sacraments.’

The elder Miss Burtons certainly did look shocked, but as for Lady Chislehurst, to Mrs. Harley’s surprise, she showed no sign of displeasure except a momentary twitch of her eyebrows, and replied, in a voice that had all her usual sweetness, ‘Had Consuelo said that some three or four weeks ago, and before I knew, as I do now, what it is she is thinking of, I should be sorry to hear that she had let herself use such language. Even now I think that the language itself is wrong, but as to her meaning it will do all of us good to think of it. Come, Mr. Carew, I have something particular to say to you. Have you forgotten that we here are not merely a dinner-party, but that we are members of a certain Society? There are some things which perhaps we can talk of better when we are out of the noise of knives and forks and wine-glasses; but if, by-and-by, we may sit in the western portico and watch the remains of the sunset, which I am quite sure must be lovely, I shall insist on our taking up the discussion which we left unfinished on the terrace at Courbon-Loubet.’

‘By all means,’ said Carew; ‘I could wish for nothing better.’

‘Do you remember,’ said Lady Chislehurst, ‘how you showed us your room, your books, and your labours on Political Economy? You contributed some ideas to us there. We have brought some from Rome which we are going to offer to you; yes, and to you too, Mr. and Mrs. Harley, for I think you have heard but little of these yet.’

With regard to the sunset Lady Chislehurst was perfectly right; and though the stars were sparkling when the party settled themselves in the portico, the heart of the west was still alive with rose-colour.

‘Well,’ exclaimed Harley, whilst the servants were going round with coffee and Lord Aiden was lighting a cigarette, his constant comforter, ‘no doubt for us it is a very delightful thing to look across lakes and gardens at purple mountains and sunsets, and talk about the sorrows of men who live in back-yards and alleys. It is delightful to dream of the new duty which we owe them, and new ways of discharging it. It’s a delightful intellectual exercise, just as Plato’s “Republic” was. But after all, do we, any of us, really think that we shall ever be led to any new discovery? As Mr. Stanley says, distress must always exist. Have we anything better to oppose to it than our good old-fashioned charity, or some improvement in the poor-laws?’

‘My dear Harley,’ said Lord Aiden, softly through his smoke-wreaths, ‘the monastic orders of the Middle Ages were a new discovery practically. The monasteries,’ he went on, turning to Mr. Stanley, ‘offered a certain relief to the sufferings of those who were oppressed by society; and you perhaps would say that men in the modern world should aim at finding some substitute for the monasteries.’

‘I,’ Mr. Stanley began, ‘should go even farther than that——’ But the musical voice of Lady Chislehurst interrupted him.

‘Mr. Carew,’ she exclaimed, ‘you must please listen to this. If you will allow me to do the intellectual honours of your house for you, I must tell everybody that the meeting of our Society is begun. We are in the middle of it even before we knew that it had opened. Listen, listen. This is our contribution from Rome. Mr. Stanley,’ she continued as she settled her voluminous skirts, ‘go on. We are attending.’

Mr. Stanley emitted a little dry laugh. ‘I was,’ he said, ‘merely about to observe to Lord Aiden that though the monasteries in the Middle Ages did much, we should aim at doing relatively even more. My own belief is—and here is an answer to Mr. Harley—that there is being developed in us the consciousness of a new duty—I mean our spiritual

duty to the material conditions of the poor, of which in past ages we have been in invincible ignorance.'

'It's all very well,' said Harley, 'for us to talk about this new duty ; and I quite agree that the world is growing to feel it. But have we any of us any ideas more practical than those of Foreman as to the means, the machinery, by which to put it in practice?'

'I have one friend,' said Mr. Stanley, with a momentary glance towards Miss Consuelo Burton, 'who has a very definite idea indeed.'

'Hush,' said Lady Chislehurst. 'Attend, Consuelo, tell Mrs. Harley—for you have not told her yet—what your thoughts are on the subject. You need not be shy, for they have been spoken of to the Holy Father ; and they will help to show Mrs. Harley what Catholics really are.'

Carew watched the girl as closely as the dusk permitted him. He saw her impatiently turn her head aside ; he saw her for a moment bite her lip with annoyance ; and then, in a voice half constrained and half mischievous, 'My thoughts,' she said, 'as a Catholic, Lady Chislehurst, are these. Men who are housed like pigs can hardly pray like Christians : and where life is a long flight from starvation, it is not a flight that takes the fugitives towards heaven.'

'Perhaps,' said Mr. Stanley, at once coming to her assistance, 'Miss Consuelo Burton will let me speak instead of her, and explain the idea—it is a very suggestive one—that came into her mind after her visit at Courbon-Loubet. Suppose, then—Mrs. Harley, here is the point that appeals to you—suppose we take these men who are housed like pigs. The increasing masses of them, clustering in huge cities, are the special phenomenon and problem of the modern world, and the Church is interested in them just as much as the State. Of course, for these people spiritually there is hope in the uncovenanted mercy ; but our business as Catholics and as practical men is not to trust to the

uncovenanted mercy, but to extend the kingdom of the covenanted.'

'Hear, hear!' exclaimed Mrs. Harley, softly.

'This is the idea,' Mr. Stanley went on, 'which, not to mention myself, has impressed itself most strongly on the mind of Miss Consuelo Burton. She feels that sanitary and social work, carried out on some wide and organised plan, is a necessary part of modern religious propagandism; and in case any one should think such sentiments un-Catholic, I may mention that I have expressed them myself in language quite as emphatic in a short discourse which I submitted lately to the Pope, and which will very shortly, I hope, be published with his sanction.'

'Indeed!' said Lord Aiden. 'I shall read that with interest. But let us by all means hear what the ideas of our young friend here are.' And he laid his hand on the back of Miss Consuelo's chair, as if entrusting the wood to transmit the action to her shoulder.

'Well,' said Mr. Stanley, 'the idea is simply this—and at first sight it will not strike you, perhaps, as so novel as it really is. You have spoken, Lord Aiden, of the monastic system already. The idea I am about to explain is a modification of that system. You all recollect, no doubt, a little economic argument which I had at Courbon-Loubet with that worthy man Mr. Foreman?'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Harley, 'perfectly—every word of it.'

'You recollect, then,' said Mr. Stanley, 'what I told him his error was? I told him that the minority, who, he said, were thieves and marauders—I mean the men who direct and organise industry—I told him that these men seized on the growing wealth which they possess for the plain reason that virtually they created it; and further, that they only created it for the sake of themselves possessing it. The desire to possess it, I urged on him, was a natural appetite, having the same relation to production that hunger has to cooking; and to expect that the talent and astonishing mental activity which on the part of the minority has

produced our modern wealth—to expect that this activity will still continue to be developed when its normal stimulus is wholly taken away from it, is to expect of the minority an act of supernatural virtue as unfit for the world at large as the rule of the Trappist cloister. Perhaps you recollect my having said that to Foreman?’

Several voices murmured ‘Yes,’ and Mr. Stanley continued :—

‘I put my criticisms in that way without premeditation ; but it at once struck Miss Consuelo Burton. It was merely a seed dropped by the wayside ; but in her mind it has flowered into this suggestion. The monastic rule, she argues, is not fit for every one, but it is fit for some, and these the most devoted of mankind. Why, then, should not the old monastic renunciation of riches be revived in the modern world, under the form of a renunciation of profits? If all the directors of industry, the inventors, the sharp men, the men of energy and enterprise, through whose means industry grows in productiveness, would still exert themselves to maintain and increase production, and at the same time forego their claim to the increased products, then, she says—and she is perfectly, she is obviously, right—the Socialistic problem would be solved. But, as we said just now, to forego these natural claims would be nothing less than a special monastic virtue of precisely the same character as poverty and celibacy. It is not to be thought of for all ; but, she asks, may it not well be thought of for some?’

‘Yes,’ said Lady Chislehurst, in a reverie of approbation, casting her eyes down on a small silver crucifix—‘yes, the point is there.’

‘Do you mean,’ interposed Harley, ‘that some—what shall we say—some railway company should every quarter pay its dividends into the poor-box? I’m not laughing—I’m merely trying to get at the idea.’

‘No,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘the idea is not that. What has presented itself to the mind of Miss Consuelo Burton is

a vision of some new industrial order, or orders, under which the monastic vow of poverty might be applied to our modern factory system. Her notion, in fact, of a monastery or a convent is a modern factory where the hands should be monks or nuns ; where the spire should rise side by side with the chimney ; and the quiet cloister should refresh the mind after the rattle of wheels, and looms, and belts.'

'That,' said Lord Aiden, in a tone of poetic appreciation, 'makes a really beautiful picture. And when are we to look forward to seeing Miss Consuelo Burton an abbess? But, tell me,' he added, relapsing to the levels of prose, 'how would such an establishment differ from any other co-operative enterprise based on the principle of profit-sharing?'

'Ah,' said Mr. Stanley, 'that is what I am coming to. The profits, of course, instead of going to the capitalists, the manager, and the specially gifted few, would be the property of the whole body. They would not, however, be divided amongst the workers, and thus take the form of increased wages. That result would stultify the whole scheme. The whole monastic body would live in voluntary poverty—on lower wages, rather than on higher wages, than the average worker outside ; and all their profits would be set by as a fund to relieve distress, especially such as is caused by commercial crises. In that way the Catholic religion and system would be brought into practical contact with the modern industrial world, and would become a visible part of it. The idea is one—at least I find it so—which becomes more suggestive the more one thinks of it.'

Silence reigned for some moments when Mr. Stanley ceased speaking. At last Mrs. Harley whispered, 'Yes, the idea is beautiful.' And then, with an abruptness which made them all start, Carew, as if continuing some train of unspoken thought, said, 'Charity is far from being their only work. It is not even the chief. Their chief work will be their living example. By the stern simplicity and yet perfect content of their lives, by the decency of their

habits despite their utter poverty, they will form a moral leaven amongst the labouring classes at large, and do more than anything I ever had thought imaginable to give an ideal dignity to our modern factory-labour. Fancy,' he went on, 'over the gate into the factory-yard, if we saw a crucifix placed there with real meaning! And this too—think of this. Here and there some man of high position has renounced his place in the world and adopted the life of a labourer. In the present condition of things such conduct is useless and fantastic; it is very much like madness. But there would be nothing fantastic in it if labour became conventual.'

He ceased as abruptly as he began, and his eyes were turned in the gloom towards the glimmer of Miss Consuelo's dress.

'Well,' said Mr. Stanley, in his most practical and incisive accents, 'you have heard the idea that Lady Chislehurst promised you. I don't know that to-night we can do much towards making it clearer.'

'Anyhow,' said Mrs. Harley, 'you have given us much to think of.'

'And I,' said Carew to himself when his friends had once more left him—'I might join my life to the life of a woman with thoughts like these, if I had not bound myself by an idle debt to another, from which she—my better angel—would despise me if I released myself.'

CHAPTER VI.

AN ARBITRESS.

HE passed the night in restless and almost irritated perplexity. The irritation, however, was a hopeful and healthy sign, for he was next morning in a more vigorous mood, even if not in a happier one. He resolved in a practical way, like a man beset by creditors, to cast up his moral

accounts, and examine instead of contemplating his situation.

How did he stand with regard to Miss Capel? That was the great question which he must carefully reconsider. He tried to do this, and indeed he did do it, impartially; and here is the story which for his own benefit he told himself.

The moment he was free from the spell of the girl's presence, the void left by her absence was suddenly filled to overflowing by a throng of practical interests and entirely alien feelings. On this, his old desire for her, if it did not actually die, became as faint as the moon's disc in daylight, and the evanescence of his attachment for her had paralysed his power of imagining her attachment to him.

Then he went on to reflect as follows. His forgetfulness of her was not wholly his own fault. She had in many ways laid the foundations of it herself. Never for a moment had she seemed to consider the bare possibility of her freeing herself from her existing engagement. If at times she had yielded tenderly to her inclination for him she recovered herself with ease, and very often with flippancy; and if he had occasionally wondered since he had left her whether she might not be really unhappy at the loss of him, he had checked the thought as the child of his own vanity.

At last, late in the day, utterly unexpected, her letter had fallen on him like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, or rather it had been like a dagger stuck suddenly in his heart. After all, he discovered that this girl had felt for him, not only as much as she had seemed to feel, but more; and when she had seemed to forget those feelings, it turned out that she was only fighting against them. She had been fighting to save herself—fighting helplessly and piteously. And he, he alone, had to answer for all this. He appeared to himself like a man who had been torturing a child for his amusement. In his own eyes he was utterly degraded and humiliated.

Yielding to an impulse that was at first but a selfish

longing for distraction, he had sought her society as a kind of mental dram-drinking, and had gradually done his utmost to evoke in her a passion for himself. He dwelt on the phrases he now remembered he had used to her—'life of my life,' 'soul of my soul,' and so forth. And in the light of the self-knowledge that now too late had come to him, he wondered blankly and bitterly at what could have then possessed him. He saw that, all the while he had been allowing this licence to his emotions, he had been doing so comfortably, with the thought at the back of his mind that they would vanish, if necessary, almost as easily as they arose ; and he had idly said to himself that the same would hold good with her. And now his position was like that of the Witch of Endor. A spirit of love had indeed arisen in her, but it was a spirit of a different order from the one he had meant to summon. It was a spirit that refused to vanish. It would not even retreat. It stood before him, and overawed him with the sound of its voice. But what was the voice saying ?

Here came the hard, the practical, the immediate point which he had to face and decide upon. Was the voice simply upbraiding him, with a resigned and hopeless despondency ? Or was it urging him, was it imploring him at once to do something ? *Something!* Why not call it by its right name ? Was it urging him, before it was too late, to fly to her rescue, and offer his hand and life to her, and save the soul whose whole future he had endangered ? Could this really be so ? Could that pleasant past, that dream of flowers and poetry, thus rise against him and demand from him this sacrifice ?

Again and again he put the question to his conscience, and his conscience seemed to him not like a single councillor, but rather like a cabinet of opposing scruples and excuses which were not able to come to any decision. On one hand it was urged that he was too late already, and that even if he offered himself Miss Capel would not accept him ; on the other, that he ought at least to allow her to

have the chance ; and again, that he also should think of the utter and hopeless shipwreck which he would if he married her be making of his practical life. He was determined, however, to force himself to some resolution ; and going to a drawer where Miss Capel's last letter was deposited, he again referred to the date on which it was written, and compared this with the interval which then, she said, separated her from her marriage.

The letter now was at least ten days old. Her marriage when she wrote would take place in three weeks' time. There were accordingly eleven days before him, in which he might give her the opportunity of saving herself from certain misery. She was still at Cannes ; and in four-and-twenty hours a letter could reach her, or even he himself. There at any rate was something settled and certain. Should he decide on making, or rather on risking, the sacrifice, he had ample time to do so. He had no excuse on that score. But what then of his conduct to Miss Consuelo Burton ? His conversation with Mr. Stanley about her came back to his mind, and he asked his conscience if she also had no claim on him, and if of the two claims hers were not the older.

At last he came to a fixed resolve on one point. He would do something, which though it might prove painful he would do at once, and do bravely and thoroughly. He would seek counsel of Miss Consuelo Burton herself. He would confess everything—the whole of his heart—to her ; he would place his life, his whole future, in her hands ; and she should at least choose his road for him, even if she could not travel it by his side.

He had settled this with himself not a moment too soon, for his friends were to come to him for the midday breakfast, and, as it happened, they arrived a little before their time.

Carew's heart began to sink within him ; but during the meal he received a little unintended encouragement. The conversation at first had been but semi-serious ; several

allusions, however, had been made to the topic of the previous evening ; and at last Mrs. Harley, in a spirit of friendly banter, said to him, 'Well, and on what do your hopes rest now? Who is going to save us from ruin and revolution—the new monastic orders, or the old landed families?'

'Both,' said Carew, laughing, though his manner was somewhat absent. 'Yes,' he went on, suddenly becoming animated, 'let the new monastic orders do all that we could dream of their doing—and I for one can dream of their doing much—I still hold that if the world is to recover its health again, if there is to be any increase of happiness amongst the bulk of the labouring classes—the classes whose content is the corner-stone of civilisation, another thing must revive besides the monastic orders ; there must be a revival of class feeling.'

'Surely,' said Harley, laughing, 'we've plenty of that already.'

'Yes,' said Carew, 'of class envy and of class fear, we have. Every one is either in terror of losing his position, or else angry and sullen at not being able to escape from it. The class feeling I mean is a feeling possible only when classes are acquiesced in as stable and natural institutions, and movement from one to the other is looked upon as only exceptional. For instance, I say this : the healthy ambition of the average country labourer should consist in a desire not to escape from his cottage, but to adorn his cottage with security, content, and affection. His eye should seek the faces of those around him, not the coat-tails of those who are just above him. And as to the aristocracy, their whole life should be guided by a sense of duty to the great multitude that is connected with them by the difference of its lot, not by the sameness of it. It is very possible that I am only a dreamer, but still I cannot help indulging the dream, that the obligation of acknowledged position, that high-breeding, and even family pride, have a mission still in the world, if we only can find it out.'

‘My dear Carew,’ said Mr. Stanley, putting his hand on Carew’s arm, ‘feeling as you feel about these gifts and qualities, I should venture to say that in your case they had a mission already.’

Carew rose from the table thinking, ‘If this be so, can it really be that I am bound to renounce my talents?’

It was now not long before the moment came for which he had been longing, though at the same time he was dreading it. The party soon, in a somewhat desultory way, proceeded to spread themselves over the villa and the gardens, and without having designed the situation, almost before he had even realised it, he found himself on a terrace alone with Miss Consuelo Burton.

He felt that now or never the bold plunge must be made: so, beating about the bush as little as possible, he paused in his walk, and, leaning against the marble balustrade, gravely raised his eyes to her, and began in this way.

‘Do you remember,’ he said, ‘our conversations at Courbon-Loubet?’

She too paused. She looked him in the face for a moment, and then said simply, ‘Yes, I have not forgotten them. Do you think that either of us is any nearer the truth since then?’

‘You are,’ he said. ‘Tell me, do you remember this? You said that in your search for truth you would let me be your helper—that is, if you needed help from any one.’

‘Did I?’ she said. ‘How long ago was that? Some weeks—I don’t think more; but during that time I have become years older.’ Then changing her tone, and with a resolute frankness looking at him, ‘Yes,’ she went on, ‘I remember quite well, and I was told directly afterwards that you wanted to help nobody—I mean not in that way.’

‘Do you believe that now?’

She merely shook her head.

‘And yet,’ said Carew, ‘it is true; but not in the way

you thought it was. I should no longer dare to say that I wanted to help you, for with far more fitness I should ask you to help me. May I,' he went on, seeing that she said nothing, and his voice as he spoke sank and became tremulous—'may I ask you a few questions?'

'Go on,' she said, 'ask them.'

'Tell me this, then,' said Carew, 'for I trust your judgment. You heard what Mr. Stanley said to me about my mission in life. Do you think it true? Do you think that it must be really a man's highest duty to consecrate any powers, any external advantages he may be born with, to the service of those who are working and suffering round him? Do you think that our first debt is due to those rather than to any private creditor's on one's conduct, whose claims, perhaps, one may be unable to satisfy without becoming a bankrupt as to all the others?'

'I think,' she said, 'you must be making some special allusion, but I do not know to what. I can only answer you generally, and tell you my own feelings. Duties like those you speak of, so it seems to me, differ in proportion to our own powers of seeing them. Some of them, or some forms of them, are more or less like ghosts: they appear to some eyes only; and those that don't see them of course have no call to follow them. But when once one of these ghosts has appeared to any one, that person is never the same afterwards. One must try to follow it even though it "lead one to the cliff" like Hamlet's father, or else one's whole life long one will feel one has made "the great refusal." I never asked or prayed to see *my* ghost; I never went out of my way to think about the poor or about the people; but I seem to have absorbed like a sponge all I have heard about their lives, or read about them in the newspapers, or seen by chance in the streets or other places. I remember our housekeeper once telling me that cocoa would take the taste of any groceries it was standing near. My thoughts, in the same way, are full of the taste of poverty. I don't try to keep it there, but I can't get rid of it.'

‘I,’ said Carew, ‘like you, have seen the duty you speak of. The same ghost has appeared to both of us. Do you think, then, using your conscience as mine, that no consideration for the mere personal feelings either of myself or of those near me should induce me to surrender my powers of doing this duty effectually?’

She looked at him with an air of perplexity. ‘I can only tell,’ she said, ‘what I feel in the matter myself. Perhaps the time may come when I shall be called on to say good-bye, not merely to luxury, but to the pleasure of books, of poetry, of music—all those refinements with which it is generally thought a duty to pamper oneself; and I suppose in that case I should be called on to starve one whole side of my nature. Perhaps, should the time ever come, I shall be unequal to the sacrifice; but if it is a question of what I ought to do, I feel that for the duty we speak of I ought to renounce everything—the pleasure of self-culture, the pleasure of pleasing those nearest to me.’

‘Is it true,’ said Carew after a pause, ‘that you think of a conventual life for yourself, or at least of keeping yourself for such a life at some future time?’

She smiled faintly and pensively, and turned her head away from him.

‘I don’t know,’ she said, ‘if I am fitted for such a life. I am very worldly in some ways. I hate an ugly hat, or ugly gloves or boots. Though I didn’t acknowledge it at Courbon-Loubet, I have almost as much prejudice about birth and family as you have. I am fastidious about people’s manners, and I easily think them common. Oh, and there are other things—perhaps I have no vocation.’

She stopped short suddenly. Carew started and looked at her. Her head was averted, but he could see that her cheek was crimson, and her breast was lifted with a slow and suppressed breathing.

For a moment his voice failed him. He had his heart in his mouth, and a throng of words, like the forlorn hope of an army, seemed to pause, arrested and tremulous, before

they broke forth in passion. This instinctive hesitation gave him time to collect himself, and when he spoke it was with a constrained calmness.

‘Will you listen,’ he said, ‘to something I want to tell you? You must see from what I have said already that I am thinking of serious things, and you must see from my speaking about them to you that I look on you as a person who can share, and is now consenting to share, the deepest thoughts of which I am conscious: the thoughts, the feelings—I don’t know what to call them—which my soul will live or die by. You will listen to me, won’t you?’

She bent her head as a sign for him to proceed.

‘I am going,’ he went on, ‘to say two things to you; and do you say nothing—no word—in answer to the first till you have heard the second. We have talked of duty—we have talked of a special duty, which both to you and to me too seems in these days the first duty of all, and alone to give religion a body instead of leaving it merely a sigh. But I know myself so well that I dread this. I am almost certain of this—if left to myself, I shall not cease to think, but I shall never begin to act. If, however, I could find some one who could understand me and would help me—who, by sharing my thoughts and impulses, would strengthen them a thousand fold, and who would make me by her presence incapable of any shameful thought—then, indeed, I might dare to hope that on my death-bed I should be able to say to myself, “I have not lived in vain.” Can you imagine, to a soul like mine, any healing, any consolation like this? Consuelo, your name is Consolation—you must know that I speak of you.’

She had not moved. Her eyes had been still averted, but he saw that the colour was still deep in her cheek, and that she was biting her lip hard. At last, when he paused, she turned to him for a single moment, and tears, helpless and uninvited, were filling her dark eyes.

‘I have not finished,’ he went on, ‘and when you hear what remains perhaps you will think that I should not have

said what I have said. And yet no ; I retract that. I trust you so entirely that I am sure you will not misjudge me. Perhaps when I tell you all I shall lose your respect in one way ; but at least you will respect me for having honestly told you. When you went away from Courbon-Loubet—when you said good-bye to me as if I were hardly fit to be spoken to—but I won't talk of that. You know how it all happened.'

'I know,' she whispered.

'When you had gone,' he went on, 'I felt like some criminal. I didn't know what I had done, but I felt as if I must have forged, or committed some murder in my sleep. I seemed to myself to be such an utter outcast that I was grateful to the very dogs when they looked at me and put their paws upon my knee. As to you, I was not angry with you ; but it seemed to me as if, of your own free will, you had taken yourself away to some hopeless distance from me, and that I should never be able to see you or come near you again. Well, it so happened that, in those days of my desolation, I met with some people of whom I had known something before, though only a little.' And Carew gave a brief account of how he had met the Capels, and of the way in which they had come to stay with him at the château.

'The girl,' he continued, 'was very beautiful, and—will you remember, please, that I am trying to tell the exact truth to you, exactly as I should were this the Day of Judgment? As to my own conduct I am going to palliate nothing. This girl, without any effort at first on my part, seemed to sympathise and be pleased with me. If the very dogs at that time touched me by their friendliness, you may judge the effect on me of this beautiful girl's attention. By-and-by I realised that I did more than please her, and that I exercised over her a certain sort of attraction, which she made at times a strong effort to resist. Her behaviour in this way puzzled and piqued me ; the sense of her beauty grew on me. Let me make no words about it—I began to

fall in love with her ; and more than that, I determined that she should fall in love with me. As often as I was aware of any resistance on her part I was impelled to do recklessly all I could to overcome it. Little by little she made me the helpless victim of as strong an attraction as any I exercised over her. As for you, you seemed somehow far away from me. I didn't forget you, but I saw you, as it were, in another world through some semi-opaque barrier. It is not very pleasant for me to have to tell you this, but you must see me just as I am. I will have no secrets from you. What do you think of a man with constancy such as mine? What could be the value of anything I could offer you? Are you not shocked—disgusted?'

'Did I not tell you,' she said in a low steady voice, 'that during the past few weeks I have grown older by years? I always understood some things more clearly than some girls. The best constancy in man is a virtue ; the best constancy in woman is an instinct. I do not judge you as if I had lived only on romances. Go on—you were in love with her.'

'I must,' said Carew, 'tell you in what way. Her influence on me was that of some drowsy spell. I might have roused myself from it ; I ought to have done so : I can only say that I did not. And yet all the while I knew in my heart of hearts that I should wake up one day and find that I had been loving in a dream. That an end of some kind was bound very soon to come I knew for one excellent reason. I found that the person I speak of was actually engaged already, and so far as I could see, she never contemplated breaking off the engagement. From this I drew a conclusion, which does not for a moment excuse me, but with which I soothed my conscience. I concluded that she had the same sense as I had of being in an emotional dreamland, and that she would wake up presently in just the same way as I should. In this, however, I find I have been mistaken. My sin has found me out with a vengeance. I have reason to believe that the feelings

which I indulged myself by developing in her, are of a more serious nature than I ever dreamed they could be. Into this I don't think I need go particularly. I need only say that if I leave her to the fate that awaits her I may have to answer for having made her wretched, or worse than wretched, a life that but for me and for my conduct might have been happy. There are the facts. My confession is over now. If you had not been what you are I should never have dared tell you. I am not pleading my cause, I am not defending myself. I know too well all that can be said against me. If anything can be said for me, your generosity will say it better than I can.'

There was a long pause, and it seemed to both that they could hear their two hearts beating.

When, however, the painful silence was broken, and it was broken first by Miss Consuelo Burton, her voice was still as quiet and hushed as ever.

'If you married her,' she said, 'if she left the other man, whom I conclude she does not like, for you, should you yourself be happy? Are you fond of her enough for that, or in that way?'

Whilst Carew had been speaking she had remained perfectly motionless, with no sign of feeling except that her cheek had grown pale again, and her eyes, cast down, had been fixed on one particular jasmine flower. 'Go on,' she resumed. 'Answer me. I may be able by-and-by to advise you.'

The phrase, chilly but kind, cut Carew to the heart. She seemed already to be speaking to him from the hopeless distance of a convent.

'Listen,' he replied, 'and you shall have my whole confession. You have asked me a question which refers to myself simply—to my own lot, not that of another. I seemed at the time, under the influence of the person we speak of, to be entering, as it were, some terrestrial paradise where all life moved to some dreamy imploring music, where the holiest flower of the soul was love for the sake of

love. I do not mean love as opposed to duty, but love considered as the sum and measure of duty. Well, let me tell you what in my sober waking moments I believe about myself. I believe that life, unless I sank into an idle dream again, could never for me, for my own soul, be tolerable, if devoted merely to an affection for its own sake, no matter how beautiful. Indeed, such an affection, unless it mixed itself with my principles of action and sent its pulses through all the veins of my being, of my thoughts, of my intellect, of my most strenuous moral promptings, would soon cease to be an affection at all, and would become merely a burden. In the case of the person I speak of I am certain that this would happen. 'The ideas of duty and usefulness which, if I am really to live at all, must be my life, are to her mind wholly incomprehensible. As Mr. Stanley would say, she is in invincible ignorance of them.'

Carew paused, and then suddenly went on again. 'This,' he said, 'is owing to no fault of hers. She has none of the ideas which animate you and me. She has been born and brought up in a different world from ours; and these ideas are as strange to her as the Chinese language. By birth and by education she is a foreigner. Miss Burton, I must tell you one thing more. I had forgotten it till this moment, but I must tell it you, for perhaps you will think that it helps to warp my judgment. If I marry a foreigner the bulk of my fortune goes from me. Were I not in the position I am I could easily bear that; but this loss of fortune would mean for me the entire surrender of our old family property; it would mean the handing over to others the care and interest of those whom I else might benefit, the desertion of an order I would willingly die defending, and the throwing away of that power and responsibility which my best ambition is to use, and to use for good. My own feelings, then, are these: whatever value I might set on the affection in question, however urgent might be my duty to adhere to it, adhesion to that duty would and must mean for me a practical

renunciation of nearly all others. Whether, as a fact, this affection still continues to influence me, I think you need not ask. To deny a feeling to which one has once owned, when the person who excited it has done nothing to deserve ill of one, goes to one's heart as an act of treachery. If the thing has happened it has happened, but one may be spared speaking about it.'

Miss Consuelo Burton here turned towards him with a slow melancholy movement, and looked him in the face with eyes that were now quite tearless. She seemed by her helpless silence to be expecting him to say more.

'Do you understand,' he went on, 'what it is that I wish to know? She, unless something intervenes to prevent it, will be married in a fortnight's time to a husband she does not care for. I do not know if, under any circumstances, she would break this marriage off; but I do know that, owing to me, it has become hopelessly distasteful to her. Is it my duty to offer myself to her unreservedly, so that if she choose to accept me she may? I ask you this because I feel that I should be nearer you if I left you for the sake of duty, than if, concealing the truth, I won you and possessed you in spite of it.'

'You must let me think,' she said. 'I will tell you to-morrow evening. Listen,' she exclaimed, 'the others are coming this way!' And with a violent effort changing her whole manner, and forcing her lips to wear a conventional smile, 'Come,' she said, 'let us go and meet them. We have talked of this long enough; and you promised that this afternoon you would take them all to some place—where was it? I can remember nothing.'

CHAPTER VII.

WAITING FOR JUDGMENT.

CAREW, having made his confession, felt in one way more at his ease ; though it was the case combined with the prostration that succeeds some operation of surgery. He was able, however, during the rest of the day to speak to Miss Consuelo Burton without any signs of embarrassment. Indeed, his manner to her was such, and such also was hers to him, as to give Mr. Stanley the impression that a happy understanding was being arrived at by them. He little knew the perplexity and the apprehension that were really lying on each of them like a heavy dead weight, or how each felt that before another day was over they might be face to face, not with union, but separation.

The afternoon was occupied with a distant excursion by boat, in which all the party joined with the exception of Lady Chislehurst. She went back by herself for a few hours to Baveno, in order to meet her bishop—the Bishop of Wigan and Lancaster—a prelate who had been but lately appointed to his see, and to whom she conceived she could give many hints of importance. When she returned to the Island for dinner the others had not yet arrived ; so, following an instinct which very rarely deserted her, and which she had exhibited with such zeal during her visit at Courbon-Loubet, she summoned a servant and asked to be shown the chapel. Of its own style, that of the late Renaissance, it was really a fine specimen, florid with marble and with gilding, and glowing with gorgeous frescoes. It was seated for several hundred worshippers ; there was an apparently beautiful organ ; and Lady Chislehurst learned that when there was any service the steward of the property—an accomplished musician—was the organist. The twilight prevented her inspection being very minute, but she seemed to have seen enough to be satisfied in a high degree ;

and when the others at last arrived, they found her in a state of unusual pleasure and excitement.

During dinner the cause of it was explained—the cause, or rather the causes. In the first place, she had a long conversation with the Bishop, and had told him a variety of things with regard to the poor of the north-west of England, which, so she said, he was exceedingly glad to learn. Then, whilst this interview was going on, who should be announced but one of her atheistic professors, who supplemented his lectures at the Royal Institution by an occasional service at the Positivist Church in Bloomsbury! ‘It was charming,’ she said, ‘to see the Bishop tackle him. The whole was done with such dignity and such perfect charity. I only wish Mr. Stanley could have been there too; for what do you think, Mr. Stanley, the Professor was good enough to tell us? So far as the Church’s practical teaching went he quarrelled with it, he said, upon one point only, and that point, if you please, was this. The Church regards sin as an offence against God and against our own souls; whereas the cardinal doctrine in what he called scientific morals is “that sin is simply an offence against society, and regarded as anything else is a mischievous and complete illusion.”’

Every one was astonished that Lady Chislehurst had such patience with error as even to state calmly so monstrous a doctrine as this; but what caused even more astonishment was the fact that she smiled graciously as she did so, and actually seemed to dwell on the recollection of its apostle with complaisance. The explanation of the wonder, however, presently came to light. ‘The Professor,’ she went on to say, ‘found me talking to the Bishop about the poor, and that gave him occasion to allude to the view I have just mentioned. The Bishop, you know, delights in arguing with freethinkers, and has had many a battle-royal with the Professor before; and now, the moment the vexed question was touched upon, what should you think he said? He said, “If you want to compare your religion with

Catholicism, you should talk to Mr. Stanley; or, if you can't do that, you should read what he is about to publish." And then he went on to tell us of many things which the Holy Father had said about this very Discourse, Mr. Stanley, of which you were speaking to us this morning. Well, do you know what I did? I told the Professor that, if I could possibly arrange it, there should be a Benediction in this chapel to-morrow, and that Mr. Stanley should give us a short sermon upon the very point that was at issue.'

Carew looked across the table at Miss Consuelo Burton, in remembrance of a look which, on a similar occasion, had passed between them at dinner at Courbon-Loubet; but the slight smile that was again exchanged between them had little mirth in it, and no mockery. Even the others, though experiencing the peculiar pleasure which titillates the mind when any one does anything specially characteristic, were inclined to hear Lady Chislehurst's scheme with interest.

'You must remember, Mr. Stanley,' she went on, seeing that he did not speak, 'that you are a member of our Society for the discussion and discovery of truth; and I think you owe it to all of us, merely on that ground, to let us have the benefit of your wisdom at this unexpected meeting. If you will do what I suggest I can answer for it that the Professor will be present, and he will bring with him no less person than Mr. Humbert Spender, who, as the Bishop said to me afterwards, has, of all unbelieving philosophers, done most harm to the cause of Truth.'

Mr. Stanley was quite silent for a moment or two, and his face seemed to have less expression than usual. The reason was that, much as he respected Lady Chislehurst, he could not help, as has been said before, being amused at her, and he was now suppressing a smile at her ultra-episcopal activity. No sooner, however, had he quieted his rebellious muscles, than he said, with perfect gravity:—

'It is hardly fair on a preacher to ask, at a minute's notice, for a philosophical sermon. Pious advice, no doubt, we can always give; but arguments are things whose power

of touching others depends much on their careful and prepared arrangement ; and the best reasoner, if he has to act in a hurry, may hardly be able to be more cogent than the worst. My notes, however, I think are in such order that I might put together, into the form of a suitable sermon, a few of the main points to which I conclude the Bishop alludes, and about which I certainly did have some conversation with his Holiness.'

'I'm sure you could do so, Mr. Stanley,' Lady Chislehurst exclaimed with enthusiasm. 'Think what a blessing such a sermon might be, if only heard by men when in a mood that laid them open to conviction.'

'A modern philosopher,' said Mr. Stanley, 'is, I am afraid, not so easily converted. But it can do him no harm to hear the opposite side of the question.'

'Well,' said Lady Chislehurst to Carew as, at the close of the evening, they were all preparing to re-embark for Baveno, 'I will let these gentlemen know about to-morrow's service, and I've not the least doubt that they will be part of our congregation.'

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GOSPEL OF RENOVATION.

THE following day the Harleys, Lord Aiden, and Mr. Stanley appeared at the Island, during the morning, as they had done before ; but there were no Miss Burtons and there was no Lady Chislehurst. Lady Chislehurst would not come till the afternoon, being busy at Baveno with beating up a congregation ; whilst the eldest Miss Burton, who had been nursing a slight cold, thought it best to wait and come over with her ; and both her sisters decided to do the same.

To Carew this was half a relief and half a disappointment. As the hour drew near when he was to receive an answer

the sense of suspense became more and more pressing, and produced, as is common in such cases, a miserable mixture of exhaustion and utter restlessness.

The day wore slowly on, and the afternoon was maturing, when at last the chapel bell began a monotonous tinkle, and two boats could be seen making their way towards the Island. Carew, glad of anything that demanded exertion, went down to meet them. His own friends had just landed when he arrived, and Lady Chislehurst, like an angel at the gate of Paradise, was watching the debarcation from a second boat of a party of men, with a lady or two, who, she felt persuaded, were all of them on the eve of conversion. She at once introduced to Carew the Professor and the Philosopher—both of them men with a certain grim refinement in their faces, and a mixed air in their dress of deference for convention and contempt of it. The others she merely included in a gracious and comprehensive smile, naming Carew to them, who replied by raising his hat, and at once proceeded to lead the way to the Villa. He had no opportunity, even had he desired one, of exchanging more than a moment's greeting with Miss Consuelo Burton till they were all of them passing into the chapel down a long corridor, and even then there was time for only a single sentence. It so happened that she was walking behind the others, and when, on arriving at the chapel-door, Carew stood holding aside a curtain, she turned to him as she passed, with eyes as frank as a sister's, and yet with a something in them which a sister's could never have, and said :—

‘I will tell you this evening what yesterday I promised I would tell you.’

A few minutes later the service had begun, and the representatives of modern thought were wondering when it would end. To their clear and masculine intelligences it was indeed a melancholy thing to see men and women in this grand scientific century bowing to a Power who was nothing but a nursery dream, gravely lighting ridiculous

rows of candles, and asking the heroine of a nursery fable to pray for them ; whilst the whole ceremony was led by a man who, though they had reason to believe him a sane and even accurate thinker, was now posing before them dressed up like a harlequin. They sniffed the incense as though it were an effluvium from some moral sewer ; and the note of reverence and contrite humility which, in the music and the immemorial Latin, sounded through the whole liturgy, was to their ears as irrational as a chorus of cats at midnight. They bore their trial, however, with a very creditable patience ; and at last it came to an end, and Mr. Stanley mounted the pulpit.

A perfect silence at once reigned through the chapel. There was not a whisper, not a foot nor a book was shuffled.

‘*I will take,*’ he began, with an absence of conventionality which at once fixed and increased the curious expectation of his hearers—‘*I will take for my text these verses from the General Epistle of St. James.*

“Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and ye shall eat your flesh as it were fire. . . . Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept by fraud, and crieth ; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled ; notwithstanding ye give them not those things needful to the body, what doth it profit ?

“To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

‘*I take,*’ proceeded Mr. Stanley, ‘*these verses for my text because I can think of no others that deal so directly with the heart of that special subject which I have been*

asked to speak about this afternoon. That subject is familiar, I believe, to all who are now listening to me. It is the chief subject which divides modern thought, and you all entertain about it certain special doubts and opinions. To make clearness doubly clear, I will define it in few words, so that you all may see at starting that you and I have the same things in our minds.

'The subject, then, is the nature of virtue, or duty, or goodness, or whatever we like to call the conduct and the moral condition which is held to be most desirable and most admirable in a man and in a citizen. And this virtue—pray remember this, for the whole discussion hinges on it—we have to look at in two lights: first, as conduct, which we desire that citizens should practise; and, secondly, as conduct which citizens can be induced to practise. Why do we wish them to be virtuous? How are they to be persuaded to be virtuous? For, as we all know, it is not easy to be so.

'These two questions are at the bottom of all human problems, not for the Christian world only, but equally for those who cast all religion aside and only busy themselves with political and social improvement. And they require discussion mainly for this reason, that at the present day two answers are offered to them which are thought to be, and which certainly seem to be, contradictory.

'The first answer is an answer we have inherited from our fathers. It is the traditional answer of the Church and of the Age of Faith, and is associated with prayers, sacraments, dogmas, and so forth. The second is supposed to be the great discovery of the age of Science and of Reason.

'I will sum them up both briefly. The first is, that virtue and duty have for their object God, and that our inducement to practise them is the desire to please God and the fear of offending Him. The second answer is, that their object is our fellow-man and the health of the social organism; whilst our inducement to practise them is in part the constant prompting or teasing of the tribal instinct, or conscience, and

in part our own sympathies, and dread of the disapproval of others, aided by a glow of emotion consequent on the contemplation of idealised Humanity. I presume that you desire me to contrast these two answers, and show you how, as a Catholic, I would either vindicate the former against the latter, or else reconcile the two.

‘Let me begin, then, with the second answer—the answer universally given by that modern science which all over the world is said to be supplanting with its simple and demonstrated truths the misleading fables and superstitions of what is commonly called religion. For I have something very decided to say to those who consider this answer satisfactory. I have to say to them, deniers of Christianity as they are, that I not only think their answer has strong claims on our attention, but, within limits, I think it entirely true.

‘To show you that I speak of it with my eyes open, I will state it a little more at length. The scientific moralist of to-day, then, tells us that an act is virtuous because in proportion as such acts are practised the sum of human happiness is maintained or increased; and that an act is evil or sinful, not because our own souls are sullied by it, but because in proportion as such acts are practised sorrow and suffering eventually develop themselves amongst others. One of the most popular and gifted exponents of this theory—I am referring to George Eliot—has explicitly contrasted, as objects and ends of virtue, personal perfection and holiness, which is pointed out as a false object, with “those material processes by which the world is kept habitable”—these latter being held up as the true object; or, to quote a more comprehensive phrase from the same authority, virtue refers and only can refer to, is tested and only can be tested by, its reference to “that great cause by which suffering is to be made to cease out of the world.” Thus, the only sin which we can commit against ourselves consists in making ourselves less efficient members of society; and the whole body of acts which we call sins generally would cease to be

sins, would be virtuous or else indifferent, if other human beings would thrive no worse in consequence of them. This theory, it is claimed by those who support it, sets virtue on a solid and scientific basis; and by freeing it from its supposed connection with a fantastic and unreal object, makes it incalculably more efficacious in promoting its object in reality.

‘I think that, so far as such a matter can be explained in a few words, I have described this theory fairly, and shown that I appreciate what are its salient points. And I repeat, what has possibly been a surprise to some of you, that within limits I think it entirely true, and I think it not only true, but a truth newly discovered. I will only in passing make one criticism, which I shall return to by-and-by, but which at present I will simply indicate. I wish to say that there is a certain class of acts, of forbearances, and conditions of the soul, which the Church and religious people generally regard as virtues, but which this theory can neither explain, enjoin, nor make room for. The state called holiness is an example of the virtues I refer to, or rather, it may be said to be a name that comprises all of them. But I merely mention this point as one I shall recur to by-and-by. For the present I waive it. I will put these virtues aside, as though they were not virtues at all, and speak merely of those that are left, as if they were the only virtues existing for us: and they do indeed comprise by far the larger part of them.

‘With regard, then, to this great body of practical virtues, such as honesty, uprightness, temperance, justice, self-control, unselfishness—with regard, I say, to this great body of virtues, and the moral code that enjoins them, I fully and frankly admit, as a Catholic and Catholic priest, that the modern explanation of them is not only ingenious but true. I am prepared to admit that the test and the justification of virtue is its tendency to maintain and promote the general well-being of the social organism—the improvement and perpetuation of this human race of ours on the surface of

this planet. I say I admit this explanation. I do more than admit it: I welcome it, and I do so in spite of a consideration which some of you might perhaps think would stagger me. I told you that I recognised it as not only true but new—a new discovery. I recognise further that the discovery has been made outside the Church, and mainly by men hostile to the Church, and I do not welcome it one whit the less for that.

‘Let me ask you to bear this last statement of mine in your minds—a startling statement to non-Catholics, coming from a Catholic priest—whilst I make what at first may strike you as a fantastic and meaningless digression.

‘The doctrine of Transubstantiation, as taught by the Catholic Church, is regarded generally by the non-Catholic world as nothing more than an arbitrary and superstitious paradox. Most of these, however, who are now listening to me are, probably, aware that this doctrine, whether true or false, involves a train of reasoning of the most close and elaborate kind; in fact, that it implies and depends upon certain of the philosophic conclusions of the most commanding and most comprehensive thinker that ever lived. It implies and it depends upon certain philosophic conclusions of Aristotle. The same may be said of other ideas and doctrines, which have been either formally enunciated or are generally held by the Church; but this, of Transubstantiation, is enough to illustrate the fact I am going to dwell upon. It illustrates the fact which to the Protestant world may seem curious, that the philosophic system of a heathen philosopher forms an integral part of Catholic Christianity. Yes, let me say it again; the laborious conclusions of one whom none of the Apostles had even heard of; whose name is never mentioned in Gospel, in Epistle, or in Creed—one who himself knew nothing of God the Son, or of God the Father—the views, the conclusions of this heathen amongst the heathens, are now living parts of the body of the Catholic Church—bone of its bone, flesh of its sacred flesh.

'I must further add this. Aristotle's influence over Christian thought dates not from the Apostolic, not even from patristic times, but from the Middle Ages. The Church remained for centuries altogether unconscious of a body of intellectual beliefs which, in the fulness of time, it recognised as involved in, and as essential to, its teaching.

'Perhaps now you realise why I have thus digressed. The relation of the Catholic Church to the philosophy of Aristotle is the type of her relation to all thought and all discovery that is outside herself. Whether truth is discovered within her fold or without it matters nothing to her. Just as in nature she sees one revelation of God, so does she see another in the heart and in the intellect of man; and just as she interprets the truths which the Heavens declare, so does she take into herself and assimilate the truths which human society discovers. She may not do this at the first moment of their discovery, for the process of assimilation is gradual; but the Holy Spirit, the soul of the Mystical Body, the 'forma corporis,' as St. Thomas calls the soul—the Holy Spirit knows its own times and seasons, and the assimilation takes place at last. The truth which at this moment the Church is beginning to assimilate is, in my judgment, that modern theory of virtue by which its own authors conceive that the theory of the Church will be superseded.

'Now we come to the point where I and these modern thinkers part company. I believe that so far is their theory from superseding that of the Church, that it is the Church alone which can make their theory practicable. In the temple of the Church there is a vacant place waiting for it, and in that place it will help to build up the fabric; but, taken by itself, as it now stands, it is like a carved stone lying useless in an Egyptian quarry.

'Such is my belief; and I shall now explain it. Virtue, as we all know, is not only not coincident with our natural impulses, but one of its great characteristics is that it constantly runs counter to them. Conscience, therefore, which we may call the spokesman, the steward, the factor, for virtue,

must justify virtue in a way which shall satisfy the demands of the intellect—the demands of the intellect in its most serious and most searching mood. Now conscience, according to the theory we are discussing, justifies virtue, as we have seen, by pointing to its connection—a connection which I assume to be demonstrated—with the general well-being of the race, or, if we like to use a sonorous and popular phrase, the collective well-being of humanity.

‘So far so good. So far conscience would be right; but if this were its last word, if it had nothing further to add, I maintain that it would have been right in vain. Here I part company with the discoverers of the modern theory. I maintain that the well-being of this perishing human race, regarded by itself, and apart from any further beliefs about it, is not an object which can so present itself to the heart or mind as to force any constant, any general self-sacrifice for the sake of it. It is not an idea on which the heart or mind can permanently or generally rest satisfied.

‘The ordinary duties and the ordinary forbearances of the day no doubt become easy to us by habit and education; but for anything beyond these, when there is anything hard to be done, anything delightful or anything alluring to be resisted, above all, when any continuous meaning and hope is sought for in life, habit is not enough. We want to know clearly on what this meaning depends, and to see that the object which our struggles are to subserve is satisfactory. The intellect, as it were, goes into retreat; fixes itself on this question, broods over it, tears it to pieces, does all it can to see it as it really is, free from all illusions. And I say again, that, when submitted to this criticism, the welfare of the race, of humanity, of the Social Organism, of the human inhabitants of this planet, is an idea which can permanently satisfy neither the heart nor the intellect of man.

‘Perhaps for a generation to those who have first seized on it, it may seem satisfactory, because it has the glow and the bloom of novelty. But the bloom will not stand the friction of persistent thought, which the mind instinc-

tively will be always longing to bear on it ; and by-and-by a more sober and far keener judgment will supervene. To the eye of reason, unaided by faith, but aided on the other hand more and more by silence, this planet we inhabit will seem more and more insignificant, the human beings who swarm on it more and more microscopic, their duration as a race more ephemeral, their collective destiny more indifferent. The little circle of personal pleasures and appetites, embraced by the glance of selfishness, and measured by the standards of selfishness, may indeed retain its hold on men. But this is the sphere not of virtue but of the exact reverse of virtue. Virtue can only be ours, according to the scientific theory, through our rising out of this sphere, taking a wider view, and contemplating the race as a whole ; and that object of contemplation, unless we have faith to aid us the more familiar we grow with it will grow less and less—I don't say only less impressive, but less interesting. Contemplation for the scientific moralist will have an effect the exact reverse to what from time immemorial it has had upon all believers. To the believer the withdrawal of the soul from the vain interests of the world opened a vision of the deeper realities behind the world. To the unbeliever this same earnest withdrawal may indeed show him that the world is vain ; but it will show him that anything beyond the world is colder and vainer still. No idea more depressing, more hopeless, more ludicrously miscalculated to evoke heroism or to curb passion, can possibly be imagined than the human race as a whole as it shows itself to the eye of reason unaided by faith.

‘ But to change listlessness into life, to change contempt into reverence, to fire the lukewarm soul with the spirit that makes martyrs, one thing only is needful—one thing suffices. That is a belief in God, and the human soul as related to God. I am not referring at present to the personal desire for heaven or the personal fear of hell. I am not referring to that at all. I am referring simply to the effect of these beliefs on that Idea which the thinkers of the day present

us with—the Idea of the human race as a single organic Whole, to which we owe all our duties. It is to that that I am calling your attention. I am thinking at present of no other point but that. That is the point to which all I have said already has been leading up. Let me ask you to listen to me earnestly.

‘Duty to the race, as a substitute for duty to God, is, I say, worth nothing; it means nothing. But duty to the race regarded in a very different way, regarded as a new and more definite interpretation of our duty to God, is a conception which to us as Catholics is of the very highest importance. It does not supersede that duty; no: it helps us to understand its meaning and its depth more fully. I tell you I sit at the feet of our modern teachers; I accept the good of the social organism as the formal test of virtue; I admit that virtue is relative to that good altogether; I mean by this good of the social organism, the amelioration of the material condition of each individual life; but I declare that such amelioration can present itself to us as a duty, so as to satisfy the intellect and take hold of the heart, only in virtue of a living belief on our part, that it somehow represents the will and purpose of God, and points to issues which reason can not even guess at. The perpetuation of the race, so long as the planet is habitable—which it will be for only a moment longer—a moment only as compared with the life of the universe—this object, in itself so unsatisfactory, becomes transfigured when we believe that God wills it; when we know that some purpose, behind the veil, is subserved by it; and when we realise that virtue, though its formal test may be its social results merely, is in itself, is in its essence, a co-operation with God’s will—the will of Him who holds the stars in the hollow of His hand, and whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain—to whom the earth is no larger than an ant-hill, but to whom an ant-hill is large as all infinity.

‘Once let the scientific moralist see his creed thus affiliated to Christianity, and whether or no he can believe

the Christian religion true, he will see that, if true, his theory clings to it, and coheres with it, and coalesces with it, and acquires a something which it never had before. On the other hand, let the Catholic and Christian once see his own religion assimilating this scientific theory, and he will see a practical relationship, which he may have been tempted to doubt of, suddenly reveal itself between that religion and the special problems of the day—between the religion of the ages of faith and the problems of the age of railways. He will hear the voice of the Catholic Church telling him as clearly as any scientific theorist or lecturer, as clearly as philanthropist or republican reformer, that it is not enough to conceive of virtue as referring to our own souls' salvation or that of the souls of others. He will see that because it does refer to the spiritual condition of others it refers equally to their material condition also. He will see this, and seeing it, he will find that the echoes of the Mass and the confessional follow him, and mix naturally with the clatter of omnibuses.

'Let me dwell a little longer on this. I can hardly leave it. A man's home, his family, his means of livelihood—these are the chalice which holds the sacramental wine of his life, and if we allow the chalice to be soiled or leaky the wine will be defiled or wasted. God wills that it should not be wasted; and though even in this case, there is hope that in His uncovenanted mercy he will gather up the scattered drops, yet, so far as we are concerned, wasted it most certainly is: and if so, for that waste we—we—are responsible. If we are responsible when we make one brother offend by tempting him, we are equally responsible if we make him offend by leaving him in those wretched conditions where nothing but offence is possible. This truth in its fulness is only now dawning upon the world. It is the special revelation vouchsafed to us in this epoch of scepticism. In former ages the world was blind to it, and so, let us hope, it did not know sin. Now the Church is receiving the revelation. She that assimilates all things that

are of God, no matter by what channels they are sent to her, she is assimilating this new truth—her spiritual duty to the material condition of men; and just at the time when the nations are declaring her to be dying, she against whom the gates of Hell shall never prevail is giving to the nations a new sign of life.

‘I have no wish to enter into the vague land of prophecy; but I feel myself not to be talking as a prophet, but as an ordinary man making an ordinary forecast, when I say that new saints such as St. Bernard, St. Dominic, and St. Francis will find in the near future a new field opened to them; and for us who are not saints the same field will be open also—the field of sanitary and of social improvement, the field of trade, of factory labour, and the capitalistic system. Through all the sights and sounds of the present day, through the noise of the terminus, through the hoardings covered with advertisements, we shall, with no sense of incongruity, discern the vision of God; and when, tired at night, we are closing our eyes in sleep, we may feel that we have laid our most material labours on His altar. Christ, when on earth, learnt literally a material handicraft. The mystical Body of Christ, which is on earth still, will not disdain the path that has been trodden by the Son of the Carpenter.

‘And now I am going to make an abrupt transition. Having said thus much of that great body of virtues which modern science has analysed, and with results so important, I return to those other virtues which, for argument’s sake, I left out of count at starting: those virtues which I said the scientific moralist could never explain, and which, perhaps, he does not consider to be virtues at all—I return to these; and having spoken of these I shall conclude. In speaking of them, what I trust to show you is this: not that their object is God, and our own souls as related to God—for that, though true, hardly requires proof—but that, so far are they from not being virtues from the utilitarian standpoint, so far are they from being a superfluous addition to those virtues whose object is the welfare of society, that it

is through them and through our possession of them only that the utilitarian virtues become in any way binding on us, that we acquire grace to practise them consistently, or find in practising them any sure comfort.

‘I say, then, once more that the service of the human race is a satisfactory service—satisfying the entire emotional and intellectual needs of man—only because the social welfare of that race is the will of God. Thus duty consists in co-operating at all costs with that will; and very often the cost is heavy indeed. Here, then, comes the crucial practical question. What consideration or motive is to nerve us to bear that cost? One thing, and one thing alone; that is the love of God. And now consider this. There are many states of the heart, as you all know, in which the love of anything remote from the world of sensual pleasure is impossible; in which any ideal aim, in which any spiritual conception, seems to us like a dream. The heart, then, is like a mirror which has been painted on, and which cannot reflect the sun; or like one of the contacts in an electrical apparatus which has become dirty and will not allow the current to pass through it. In contradistinction to a state of the heart like this is that state, or those states, which we call by the name of holiness. Holiness consists in the cleansing of this mirror, or this electrical contact, so that our hearts may receive the vision of God, may be conscious of the current of His love, and may themselves be moved towards Him. It is only in virtue of their being in this state, or of their approaching it, that we can feel the love which enables us—which alone enables us—to do and to suffer all things; which alone will give a value in our eyes to all our social activities, in face of the apparent failure surely in store for so many of them; for it will teach us to lay them in faith as an oblation at His feet.

‘I speak of practical failure, and I do so with deliberation; because if there is one lesson taught us by all human experience, all human experience teaches us this—that partial failure is sure to crown every effort; and however we

struggle to alleviate misery, though we may do much, we shall never make earth a paradise. There is no Utopia, there is no new Atlantis, there is no Icaria for us here. The knowledge that this is so—and no enthusiasm, however strong, can in the long run shield us from the knowledge—would be enough to daunt us, and would be sure to daunt us, if we did not know one thing: that behind this apparent failure there is a power that judges our acts, not by what to our eyes they seem to have accomplished, but by what He sees they aimed at. It is in this we have the indescribable and unfathomable comfort of knowing in faith that a life which in its visible results is only a saddening failure, a forlorn repulse, is not for that reason reckoned of less value when cast into God's treasury.

'Oh, my brethren!' exclaimed the speaker, breaking for the first time into the impassioned tone of a preacher, 'when we consider the millions of human beings around us now, and the countless millions that will come after us, when we consider this mass in its overwhelming aggregate, how little can be done for it by the greatest of men singly! How shall we encourage and comfort ourselves in the face of this paralysing, this insidious thought, when we are asked to sacrifice things that are much to us for the sake of what to this huge mass is so little? We can only do so by the divine paradox, the holy and saving teaching which the Church alone can give, which to the Positivists is a stumbling-block, and to men of science foolishness, that it is more important to every man that he should do his utmost for humanity, than it can be for humanity that any one man should do his utmost for it.

'And that importance to the individual lies in this. Bear with me, such of you as think the soul and its immortality a fiction—bear with me whilst I address you all as though it were the central fact of life! That importance to the individual lies in this: that he owes his soul to God as an everlasting debt; he owes to God this soul's submission to God's will, and its co-operation with God's will; and

he is bound to keep this soul pure and holy, because without such virtues he is unable to see God, or do the work God wills in this stony social vineyard. Remember this—I beseech you remember this: in exact proportion as these virtues are cultivated does the Divine Vision become clearer and the motive power of social virtue grow in strength. Hence,' Mr. Stanley proceeded, and his voice, which still retained its earnestness, seemed suddenly to soften into a note of pleading personal solicitude—'hence we see how the reception of the Lord's Body, together with the preparation needful for receiving it worthily, fits us, not only for the repose of heaven, but for work in the modern world. The same, too, may be said of another Sacrament—the Sacrament of Marriage. Marriage, as every priest knows, as every man of the world knows, cannot in every case—not only is not, but cannot be a perfect union. The circumstances do not admit of it. But there can be, and there are, good marriages, just as there are good communions. There are marriages in which the intellect and the sympathy of the husband and wife so unite as to direct their two lives with a doubled intelligence and ardour to their work in the world, and with a devotion doubled in clearness and in steadfastness to offer that work to God.

'Sacramental, too, in their nature, are those external advantages which raise the minority of the world above the majority. And this observation brings me to the last thing I have to say to you. You will see that throughout my address to you, I have been addressing myself to those who by position, by intellect, by education, are placed more or less above the ordinary level of mankind. To the labouring classes themselves there is a similar message to be given, but I am referring now to the others, because to their class you belong who are listening to me. You are those to whom much has been given. You are those of whom much will be required. And to you I would say—specially to such of you as have not only the gifts of knowledge and intellect, but also the advantages of material riches and the

prestige of inherited positions—to you, I would say, Think how, in the light of what I have just been urging, your own responsibility becomes more pressing and definite. What the chisel and the trowel are to the labourer, your wealth and your social example are to you. Should it be God's will that in the hidden course of the future these tools should be taken from you, you will use whatever tools may be put into your hands instead; but so long as they remain yours do not be ashamed of them, do not think, like cowards, of casting them away from you. Do not hide your talents in a napkin through any fear of other men's envy or your own heavy responsibility. Use these splendid tools: your duty is to use them. And if you do, in all human probability you will be confirmed in their possession here, as well as meriting the reward of God hereafter.

'But suppose that, as I hinted, they should be taken away from you, through God's permission in the course of social change, and should your practical power for good thus seem to be crippled—suppose you should lose wealth and consideration, or that any one of you should lose the comfort and the spiritual help of human love, you must not for that reason petulantly cease to struggle. In that case turn to Christ, and think of His social condition. He had neither wealth, nor temporal power, nor a wife's companionship. But he showed Himself to us divested of all such helps and advantages, not that He might teach us to think lightly of them if they are given to us, but that He might teach us that our want of them is no excuse for our refusing to do our duty; that we should none of us say, 'Because I am poor, because I am solitary, for these reasons, Lord, I am unable to follow Thee.''

CHAPTER IX.

WHOSO LOSES HIS LIFE.

THE strangers from Baveno, as soon as the service was over, lingered at the door to address a few words to Carew ; and, when they had done this, they also expressed a wish to thank Mr. Stanley for the sermon he had just given them, at the same time saying that they would not undertake to criticise it except by praising the courtesy and moderation of its tone. They were not, however, allowed to go without the offer of some slight refreshment, and Carew also took them through part of the Villa and the garden. By the time he had seen them into their boat the daylight had almost faded, and the first bell rang as a warning of approaching dinner. The decisive moment now could not be long postponed. Dinner was the only event that stood between him and it, and it may be easily imagined that, as he did his duties as host, he did not distinguish himself by any great vigour of appetite.

One remark during dinner, and one remark only, roused him. This was a question put to him by Lady Chislehurst—the same question he had himself put to the boatman—as to who lived in the Villa that had once been Madame de Saint Valery's. It appeared that prior to their coming over to chapel she and the rest of her party had been for a row on the lake, and this villa had excited the admiration of all of them. Carew said with constraint, that he knew as little about it as they did ; and the next moment, with an almost painful start, he found Lady Chislehurst telling him that they had heard some beautiful voice singing in it. Often himself had he heard, with indolent pleasure, there, the voice of Madame de Saint Valery—of Miss Capel's cousin.

At last the meal was over, and the whole party, having risen, prepared, as on former occasions, to take a stroll along the terraces. Hitherto Carew, when seeking to speak to Miss Consuelo Burton in private, had been content to

wait till a *tête-à-tête* should arrange itself naturally ; but now, almost without any attempt at concealment, he went up to her, as she stood not far from her sisters, and said in a low voice to her :—

‘Will you now tell me your decision?’

Quietly, but without hesitation, she detached herself from those near her, and slowly walked away at Carew’s side into the dimness. As soon as they were well out of ear-shot and observation of the others :—

‘Well,’ he said, ‘I am waiting. Consuelo, are you going to tell me?’

‘I am,’ she said. ‘I have thought it all over. I ought not to have taken so long in deciding. I ought not to have felt the trouble I have felt in doing so. But my mind was made up last night, after I left you—late last night ; and what we have heard this afternoon in chapel has confirmed me in my decision. As to what you do, I can of course advise you only ; but as to what I myself must do, I can only follow my conscience.’

‘Tell me,’ said Carew—‘tell me what you advise me.’

‘First,’ she said gently, ‘let me tell you one thing. You have conveyed to me as clearly as if you had used many more words what you feel for me ; and I believe you—I trust you. I’—and here her voice grew low and tremulous—‘I, if I followed my impulse, should try to make some reply to you. But why should I now? It is better not to express a feeling which most probably one will have to renounce for ever.’

‘Never!’ exclaimed Carew, with a sudden passionate energy. ‘Consuelo, I can never renounce you. My life will be blind without you.’

‘You are wrong,’ she said. ‘If you renounce me in the same spirit as that in which I renounce you, your blindness—if you are blinded—will be a blindness more clear than sight. Listen. I am going to speak very plainly. My advice is going to be of the most plain and practical kind. If your conduct towards the person you spoke of yesterday

has been such as I understand it to have been—and I am perfectly sure I did not understand you wrongly, for women in such matters have a very quick instinct—you owe that person a debt which you are bound to pay, or at all events to offer to pay. In spite of any sacrifice it may entail on you, in spite of any loss of the power and influence that you yourself are so anxious to use for good, you are bound by honour and duty to go to her and offer yourself in marriage to her. If she accepts you, and if you act to her after your marriage as truly as you did in going back to her and marrying her, you will have chosen a higher life, even should your external influence be lessened, than you would have if, by doing a wrong to her, you had retained the power of making that influence larger.'

'And suppose,' said Carew, 'that my offer is rejected?'

'In that case,' said Miss Consuelo Burton, 'you at any rate will have done your duty. So far as she is concerned you will be free; and then, perhaps, you may find one who, though not better herself, is able to help you better. Else, else—what shall I say?—you will have made your sacrifice; and believe me, believe me in this: I too shall have made mine. Write to her, go to her. Lose no time about it; and when you know her answer, either send me your farewell, or come back to me.' Then looking at him, with a faint smile on her face, 'Do it,' she said, 'at once. Write this very night—the moment that I am gone. If you put the duty off you will persuade yourself that it is fantastic and unreal. That is the way that lives are lost and wasted. Do this duty, and you will soon see that it is real enough. It will have made a different man of you. Remember that. Now come; let us go back to the others.'

That evening, however, Carew wrote nothing. When his guests were gone he tried to compose a letter, but after a moment's attempt he pushed the paper away from him; and a little later, alone in a light boat, he was floating out on the lake, over the wavering reflections of the mountains.

The lights of Baveno were glittering at him out of the

distance, and he knew that by this time Miss Consuelo Burton must be nearing them. He could not bear them. They seemed like eyes watching him. He longed to escape into the darkness and there settle his future. All of a sudden there came back into his mind Lady Chislehurst's mention at dinner of the villa of Madame de Saint Valery, and the singer's voice that issued from it. He hardly knew what impulse prompted him, but he turned the head of his boat at once in that direction, and with vigorous strokes of the oar was soon moving towards it.

Before long the Baveno lights were lost ; a dark promontory had eclipsed them, then another came into sight, and another ; and then a third, with the night caught in its gardens, and sprinkled through all their foliage with wavering flakes of moonlight. There were the villas, visible only by peeps, seeming to sleep softly. Their windows were dark ; they meant to Carew nothing. But at last the one upon which his thoughts were centred was before him—a sudden vision ; and there was something about it, something strange and startling, that at once made him stop his rowing.

There were lights in the lower windows—windows he once knew well ; and, to his great surprise, these lights, which evidently came from shaded lamps, were—or at least he thought they were—of a delicate and peculiar carnation colour. It was the favourite colour of Madame de Saint Valery ; and her taste seemed to have been inherited by the present occupant of the villa. The sight, as if by magic, made the past present to him. Memories rose and came hovering round him from the bosom of the lake, from the statues, from the flower-beds, from the bright interior ; and he thought of the woman who, without having made him love her, had often made him wonder why she had failed to do so.

At length, rousing himself, he softly moved his oars again, and with noiseless progress advanced somewhat nearer to the shore. Presently his ears were startled, just as a moment ago his eyes had been. He heard, or thought he

heard, the sound of guitar-strings stealing across the water with a faint elfin tinkle. Again he rested on his oars. He listened and watched breathlessly. He hardly knew why he did so. He hardly knew what he expected to see or hear, or for what reason it could interest him. He was rather acting in obedience to an instinctive sense that any curiosity, no matter how aimless or irrelevant, was a momentary escape from the thoughts that ought to occupy him.

Watching thus, he soon became aware that a figure of some sort had begun to move indoors, passing and re-passing before the lamps. At once his pulses began to beat a little quicker, and when presently this sign of life ceased he was conscious of a strange annoying disappointment. It was as if his head were aching and some one had ceased to press something cool against it. A moment or two later, however, his suspended excitement was renewed. Suddenly in the garden, close to the water's edge, just at the place where the shade of the trees was darkest, a small light with its arrowy rays revealed itself, and then began to move by jerks and fitfully. He recollected that at that place was the boat-house. In another moment a muffled sound reached him, like that of an oar struck accidentally against planking; and faintly along with this came the sound of a human voice. He strained his ears with an unnecessary and blank intensity, waiting to hear more; but meanwhile in the silence that supervened, his thoughts, like carrier pigeons, unbidden and unrestrainable, had winged their way back to Miss Consuelo Burton. The miserable realities of his situation were again finding him out. Relief, however, was at hand: again there came distraction. Perfectly clear—there could be no doubt about it—he now heard oars splashing.

His curiosity soon was supplied with even more stimulating nutriment. In another thirty seconds the darkness of trees and water gave forth a black boat into the moonlight, and in this boat there were two figures sitting. One of them seemed to be resting more or less listlessly in the stern.

The other was sculling, regularly but without much vigour. A second glance—for his first left him doubtful—revealed to Carew that they were women.

Any man who has ever felt much interest about women in general rarely loses that interest even when one of them has fixed his affections; and Carew was conscious, pre-occupied as he was, of an idly sentimental curiosity in the spectacle now before him. It was not, however, of a very keen nature, till he became aware as the strange boat moved in the moonlight that the hair of the woman in the stern was of the colour of pale gold.

‘Good gracious!’ he exclaimed to himself. ‘Am I dreaming? Has this whole day been a dream? Have I slipped back eighteen months into the past?’

He was still dizzy with this helpless sort of half-doubt, when again there struck on his ears, and this time quite clearly, the twanging notes of a guitar. He recognised the shape of the instrument in the hands of the fair-haired woman; and almost before he had leisure for any further reflection a sudden thrill ran shivery down his spine; he found himself listening to that same Neapolitan hymn which Miss Capel had sung to him at Courbon-Loubet, and by which his own musicians had called her memory back to him.

Without pausing to reflect, obedient merely to an instinct, he impelled his boat rapidly towards the singer; and not thinking how singular this conduct would appear to a stranger, he very soon was gliding within a few yards of her, in the mad expectation of finding that it was Miss Capel herself. A glance told him his error. It was not Miss Capel. It was not a stranger, however: it was Madame de Saint Valery.

She at once recognised and addressed him. There was some surprise in her voice, but not much. It was the voice of one who finds, not an unexpected thing, but a thing unexpectedly soon. Carew, on the other hand, seemed completely thunderstruck.

‘You!’ he exclaimed at last. ‘And what on earth

brings you here? And back to that villa too! Who lives there? Why have you come?' Then, as if this struck him as somewhat cold and uncourteous, 'Or perhaps,' he added with a smile, 'you live in the waters of the lake, and have risen up to sing in the clear moonlight. This is the second time that your voice has brought me to you.'

'My dear friend,' she said, 'why should you be so startled at seeing me? That villa is my own. I bought it not many months since; and though it is quite true that you may not have known that, still, after all, is it so very unnatural that I should be here? Do you think any special reason is necessary to account for it?' 'There was a faint twinkle in her eyes, as though she were gently laughing at him; but the next moment, growing quite serious, 'I will tell you plainly,' she added, 'that there is a special reason; and that reason, Mr. Carew, is this: it is my desire to see yourself. I was going to have written to you at your address in England, for when you met me at Nice, like a nice proper friend as you are, you quite forgot to tell me where you were living; but being at Milan, I saw in one of the papers that you were on the Island, or were expected there immediately, so I came here myself, and I meant to-morrow to have written to you.'

'Why,' said Carew coldly, as if he dreaded her answer—'why do you wish to speak to me?' And as he spoke he glanced towards her companion.

'Oh,' said Madame de Saint Valery, 'don't trouble yourself about her. It's only my maid, and she speaks not a word of English. What did you think of my song—the one I was just beginning? I taught it once to a certain friend of yours, who has very likely sung it to you. But come—what I have to say will take a little time in saying. Come indoors, and I will have it out with you there.'

Carew was silent. He was regretting the whole incident. He had no inclination for a scene with Madame de Saint Valery.

'Come,' she repeated after a moment or two, with the

expectant tone of a woman accustomed to be obeyed in such things.

‘It is late to-night,’ said Carew at last. ‘No—let me come to-morrow.’

Madame de Saint Valery laid her hand on the guitar strings, and struck them all together into a clang of musical petulance.

‘Stuff!’ she exclaimed. ‘Isn’t that like a man! Since when have you kept such virtuously early hours? You are shy of me. Why are you shy? I assure you you needn’t be. What I want to tell you has nothing to do with me—with me, Mr. Carew, or my wretched uninteresting life. I am not going to weary you with asking any more kindness of you. What I want to do is to do you a kindness myself. Come—please, do as I ask you. You know the boat-house. Go first; and you shall help us in landing.’

CHAPTER X.

THE CHAINS OF THE PAST LOOSENED.

A FEW moments more and Carew was in the carnation-coloured lamp-light, his blinking eyes straying over a wilderness of flowers and china. The air was heavy also with that odd excess of perfume with which women who are not on the best terms with the world seek to make up in their drawing-rooms for the lost ozone of respectability.

‘Sit there,’ said Madame de Saint Valery. ‘You know the chair well. That’s right; and now let me have a look at you. You are not yourself. What is it that is the matter with you?’

‘Matter?’ said Carew. ‘Nothing. What should be the matter? I am only surprised at this unexpected meeting; and your pink lamps dazzle me after the moonlight.’

‘If you will not tell me,’ she said, ignoring his explanation, and rising lightly from a low seat as she spoke--‘if

you will not tell me, would you like me to tell you? I know perfectly well.'

'Tell me then,' said Carew resignedly.

'You are unhappy, my friend: that is what is the matter with you; and here is something that will show you I know why.'

She moved to a small table covered with ornamental trifles, from amongst which she extracted a velvet case; and then, seating herself opposite to Carew, and close to him, tapped it gently with her slim fingers. Carew, for his part, thought she must be going mad, and he remained watching her without saying a word. After a moment's pause she opened the case, and exhibited to him, on its bed of satin, a luminous pearl necklace.

'Tell me,' she said. 'Do you know what that is? It is my wedding-present for Violet Capel.'

Carew started, caught his breath, and stared at her.

'Ah,' she went on, with a slight pitying smile, 'you see I was right. Why need you try to hide it? You are unhappy because of her.'

'Perhaps,' Carew murmured, 'not in the way you think.'

'Mr. Carew,' she retorted, 'this is not friendly of you. Why are you so reserved—I might almost say so shy? Violet Capel, though her parents won't let her see me, writes to me every week. I am familiar with every thought of hers. You may trust me that I know what I am talking about. Ah—now you sit up and begin to show some interest. You might, I think, have done me that favour at first. Well, listen, and take what I say as I mean it. I have made little enough of my own life, God knows. I believe I have lost, or am losing, even my sorrow at having made so little of it. Perhaps, however, I ought to observe in passing that I am at last on the eve of reformation and respectability. You'll hear about that some day, and I expect when you do you'll smile. But we won't talk about it now. What I want to tell you is this. Whatever I may have lost, I have not lost my sense of one thing; and that

is, my sense of the kindness you once showed me—your real interest in my welfare. You advised me well; you tried to make me make the best of myself. I decided on making the worst; but to you I am still grateful. And now the time has come when I am able to show my gratitude. I want to give a little saving advice to you. I am the only person, perhaps, in the whole world who could do so; and if you will listen to me it may really be for your happiness. Well, just be patient whilst I talk to you, and you will see that a bad woman may be on occasion a guide for a good man.'

'I'm not a good man,' said Carew, still moody.

'Well, no,' said his companion, 'I don't think you are.'

She laughed as she spoke, pleasantly. Carew laughed also, and he seemed in doing so to be turning into a more promising listener.

'No,' she repeated, 'you're not a good man. Still you are so-so. You are better than most of them; and you've been very good to me: that's all I care for. And now I begin again. You've admitted that your unhappiness is connected with Violet Capel. I don't think you have, by the way. But no matter, for I know that it is.'

'You are right,' said Carew. 'It is connected with her.'

'You are aware, I suppose,' Madame de Saint Valery went on, 'that Violet's marriage with the Prince de Vaucuse is arranged to take place very soon indeed?'

'Yes,' said Carew. 'I am aware, too, that she hates the man.'

Madame de Saint Valery smiled oddly and pensively. 'Violet,' she said presently, 'is a most fascinating and attractive girl; and I love her because she has always stuck to me, and still writes to me unknown to her parents, who have now forbidden her to have any communication with me. I don't wonder at any man's losing his heart to her, and a good many men have done so. But, Mr. Carew, you know very little about her. I know her through

and through, and I want to explain to you just what she really is.'

'Do you know,' said Carew, with the faintest trace of pique in his voice—'do you know the history of her acquaintance and friendship with me?'

'Hush!' said Madame de Saint Valery, 'do not interrupt me. Let me tell my story my own way; and when I have done I think you'll have cause to thank me. Well, Violet, you say, hates the Prince de Vaucuse, and will be unhappy with him. No doubt that's true; and no doubt, with her beautiful eyes looking sadly at you, she has told you so, or let you see it. Yes—she's perfectly right. He is not a man who could ever satisfy her nature. I want to tell you what her nature is. In one way she is the most innocent and ingenuous creature that ever breathed. She has done nothing that the world in its conventional language calls wrong; and she looks about her, unstung by any self-reproach, craving for some sympathy which she has never yet found. Yes, in one way you may call her virtue itself; you may call her girlish innocence itself. She doesn't, I think, know even the look of evil; and yet, for that very reason, it is in her nature to do it, and do it as ingenuously and simply as she would do good.'

'Do you think she would,' said Carew, 'if she were once happily married, and if her desire for sympathy were satisfied?'

'What is the good,' said Madame de Saint Valery, 'of talking about "ifs"? She will not be happily married. That matter is settled, and I want you thoroughly to understand that it is. I will come back to it presently; but let me go on first with what I am saying now. A year or two ago, when she and her parents were at Naples, she fell violently in love with a certain English officer who had left home for a time on account of a difference with his wife. He was a very handsome man, not far short of fifty; and many women, young girls especially, still continued to find him dangerously fascinating. Violet Capel at once took his fancy. She, for

her part, in a couple of days—no, in a single evening—became infatuated about him. Mr. Carew, I am watching your face as I tell you this. I know the ways of a man's face so well; and I can see that it annoys you. I don't want to annoy you; but your annoyance is a healthy symptom.'

'I'm not annoyed,' said Carew, lying. 'Go on. This is interesting.'

'Her devotion to this man,' Madame de Saint Valery went on, 'she made no attempt to conceal. She seemed not to see anything in it that called for concealment. She was as open about it as she would have been had the object of her devotion been a bon-bon; and this very openness was the means of saving her, for her parents most judiciously at once took her away. They had another object in doing so besides saving her from one admirer; for they were very anxious that she should marry another—a sort of relation of theirs, and quite a fitting match for her. He was a man of a wholly different kind. He loved her with a tiresome religious sort of devotion, and was anxious to think her, or at any rate to make her, a saint. But though she tolerated him and was good-natured to him, she never cared two straws for him—not even though he wrote her verses about prayer and piety; and she is devoted to poetry, and always saying scraps to herself.'

'I have seen,' murmured Carew, 'some of the very verses you speak of.'

'Poor child,' went on Madame de Saint Valery, 'it was no thanks to herself that that other man did not ruin her. She would have gone to her ruin with the same look in her eyes that most girls would have in going to their Confirmation. Listen, Mr. Carew: this describes her exactly. She has all the heart of Eve after the fall, and all the conscience of Eve untouched in Paradise.'

'Then there is the more reason,' said Carew sadly, 'why some one who can guide her wisely should be with her to guide her always.'

'Again you interrupt me,' said Madame de Saint Valery.

‘What I have to tell you is only half-finished. I have described to you only one side of her character. I have described to you the way in which passion or love appeals to her, and the way in which she responds to it. I must now describe her to you in relation to the world and worldliness.’

‘Worldliness!’ exclaimed Carew. ‘She hardly knows what the word means.’

‘That shows,’ said Madame de Saint Valery, ‘how easily you men are deceived. Violet is affected by the world very much as she is affected by love—with the same mixture of ingenuousness and what good people call evil. She appreciates worldly distinction, I must tell you, with a wonderful quickness, though not always, I dare say, with correctness. The brilliancy of a great position, however vaguely she conceives it, attracts her exactly as some pretty thing attracts a child, or as some man she might be in love with would attract her. The only difference would be this: just as she would cling to the man with the ingenuous passion I spoke of, so would she cling to worldly position with an equally ingenuous obstinacy; and this obstinacy, if it came into conflict with that passion, would have a noiseless and almost unacknowledged, but still a complete victory over it. She herself would not realise what the process was, and for the simple reason that she would not look at it. She would think she was the victim of circumstances; she would softly and sadly pity herself. And yet if any one suggested to her she could make the circumstances different he would find she stuck to them as a snail sticks to its shell.’

‘But, surely,’ interposed Carew, ‘the man she was in love with at Naples—there was no worldliness in the case of her fondness for him?’

‘You see,’ said Madame de Saint Valery, ‘she was only beginning then. And besides, I don’t think I told you what that man did. The morning before the Capels left Naples, he, seeing that Violet was going to escape his clutches, went off to Venice with an opera-dancer. Violet Capel is still tender over his memory, and his infidelity still fills her heart

with a feeling that has every resemblance to a profound sorrow, except that somehow it does not seem to pain her. Well, by-and-by, at Paris, the Prince de Vacluse met her. You know what he is—one of the most dissolute men in Europe, and, apart from a certain superficial knowledge of the world, one of the silliest. But then, of course, he is immensely rich : his horses win races, and he gives dinners to royalty. The Prince de Vacluse at once fell in love with Violet, and his love had all that folly of which only a middle-aged man of the world is capable. I don't know which to say she was—his passion or his whim. Anyhow, a week after he had first seen her he made her an offer of marriage. Violet was flattered by the offer, and dazzled by it, and, imagining that her heart was for ever buried at Naples, she at once accepted him. Her mother did all she could in opposition to the engagement, and the General, for various reasons, insisted on a considerable delay before the marriage. As to this last point Violet was quite submissive. She was rather pleased, indeed, at having her doom deferred ; but she was fully decided that it neither could nor should be altered. Her future, to her own mind, was finally settled, and the prospect from that moment became the foundation of her thoughts—not of her happy thoughts only, but of her soft melancholy also. Well, Mr. Carew, by-and-by she fell in love with you. The details of that process you know better than I do. Still, I know something, and I can at any rate tell you this—for you mustn't think Violet worse or more heartless than she is. No, in her way she is all heart. Whatever she seemed to feel for you she did feel. Your presence, your personality, as it were mesmerised her ; and all that tender music—tender, imploring, unsatisfied, full of far-away longings which her whole being seemed to make under your influence—that, Mr. Carew, is the real music of her nature. It is as real as the sound the wind makes on an æolian harp. But for all that it hasn't altered her conduct. It has not made her seriously even dream of doing so. Look at this,' Madame de Saint Valery continued.

‘Here is a letter which I had from her only three days ago.’
And she put a letter into Carew’s hands.

‘My darling,’ it ran—

‘Yes, the time will now soon come when I shall belong wholly to him. I mean, as wholly as I can ever belong to anybody. Ah me ! no doubt it is all for the best ; and yet once or twice it was a very hard struggle, when Mr. Carew, if I would only have let him—— But why talk of that ? Bygones had best be bygones. His way and mine lie down different channels, though surely they are channels which one day will reunite us as friends.

‘And now, darling, tell me—have you been to see the woman about my pocket-handkerchiefs ? I want, if you remember, five dozen of them, with the monogram V. de V., and the coronet above it. They are to be done in five different colours—one dozen of each. The two V’s ought to be very pretty. As to my pale-green silk, I have acted on your suggestion, and the train is to be rather shorter. Nearly all my trousseau is being made at Nice ; and you were quite right—it could hardly have been done better in Paris. I have done, too, what you advised about my dress-improver. I agree with you it is much better. By the way, your hands are the same size as mine, and exactly the same shape. If you want any gloves, you should write at once to Lang—I mean Lang at Nice. He has some that would fit you even better than any you could have made for you—*gants de Suède*, with from eight to fourteen buttons.

‘*A propos* of the shops at Nice, there is some lovely tapestry at a place in the Avenue de la Gare, which I shall make the Prince buy for my boudoir in Paris. I told you I had decided in November on having it quite done up. You too, when you are married, will settle again in Paris. God bless you, darling. You must get a house near ours.

‘I am very busy—I have so much to do and think about. The dressmaker is here nearly every hour of the day ; and mamma fusses so, and I have so little time to write. But I must say one thing more. Have you secured Eugène for

us? I trust you have. The Prince says he is a far better courier than Cirio; and after our marriage we are to travel for two whole months, and then be in England in time for a London ball or two, and for Goodwood. The travelling—think how delicious! You know how I love travelling—I don't mean with mamma and the General, who are always at me about something; but now, when I shall be my own mistress, able to come and go as I like, and ask people I like to dinner. But I must stop. "Violet, Violet." That's mamma calling. "You must come up," she is saying, "to try on this new body again. Come instantly." And I must come. Good-bye!

'Your own

'VIOLET.'

Madame de Saint Valery waited till Carew had finished his reading, and she allowed him to ruminate over it for a little while in silence.

At last she said, 'Are you quite convinced now? And do you see why I have been so anxious—as a true friend—to speak to you? I know you love Violet. I know she is just the girl to make a man unhappy; and you have probably still hopes of persuading her to alter her purpose. Should you attempt to do this you would merely distress her uselessly. I think you might make as much impression as that—distress her and mortify yourself; and I wished, since an opportunity offered to convince you of two things: one, that you have no hope of making her your wife; and the other, that she would not be a wife really worthy of you. I love her myself; but you deserve some one better, or some one, shall I say, different.'

Carew, during the reading of Miss Capel's pages, had experienced a mixture of the most oddly conflicting emotions. He compared this letter with the one she had so lately written to him, and he felt himself stung by the distinct poison of jealousy, whilst a mad longing, unreal as he knew it to be, once more thrilled through him to make the writer

his own. Conscience, too, with added animation, was pricking the sides of his intent ; and yet at the same time a glow of unexpected happiness was flooding his mind—indeed, was almost overwhelming it—as he came to understand what was really the situation. His feelings found expression, or rather a natural mask for themselves, in the blank stare which he fixed on Madame de Saint Valery. She could not understand it. When at last he spoke he dared hardly to trust his voice. He put the utmost restraint on its inflexion, and this only seemed to perplex Madame de Saint Valery more. To her ears it came like the voice of sheer desperation.

‘If,’ he said, ‘I were to ask her to marry me now, do you mean solemnly to tell me that there is no chance of her accepting me—that there is none if I went to her, if I told her I had a home ready for her, and would take her off to it immediately?’

‘There is no chance,’ said Madame de Saint Valery, ‘absolutely none.’

‘How can you know this?’ said Carew. ‘It is impossible that you can be certain of it. Nothing but certainty will prevent my going to her to-morrow. This is my resolution, and God knows I have not made it lightly.’

‘Then, in that case,’ said Madame de Saint Valery, ‘I can give you certainty. Violet Capel is married to the Prince already. Don’t start. I should have preferred to conceal the fact ; but what you have said has forced me to let you know it. They were together in London early this year, and I was there. I knew what the Prince was. I knew how strong his whims—we will call them whims, it is a prettier word than the right one—I knew how strong his whims were, and how capricious. My fear was that he might satisfy his whim for Violet, and then get tired of his whim for marrying her. Mrs. Capel would not hear of the marrying being done then ; and this delay has so increased the Prince’s keenness that he urged the girl to marry him privately before the Registrar. She made me her confidante,

and I approved of the plan. The marriage took place one morning, and I was present. But now, Mr. Carew, mark this—I pledge you my word it's true : as soon as the ceremony—I mean, the formality—was over, I did just what I had arranged to do. I took Violet back with me to her people, keeping the transaction a profound secret ; and I made the Prince understand that, for various good reasons, he will not be able to call his bride his own till he claims her openly and marries her in his own country. As for Violet, she hardly realises what has been done. She knows she is married, but her imagination has never grasped the fact.'

Carew, in a tone that filled Madame de Saint Valery with astonishment, exclaimed several times, 'Can this really be true !' Then, rising from his seat, he paced up and down the room, avoiding the furniture with slightly impatient gestures, once or twice muttering something to himself, but uttering nothing intelligible to his companion. At last, pausing in front of her, a smile broke over his face, and, holding out his hand to her, he exclaimed with suppressed enthusiasm, 'God bless you ! A thousand times God bless you ! I thank you more than you can even imagine or dream of.'

Madame de Saint Valery stared at him in bewilderment. He seemed to understand her expression.

'You think me odd,' he said. 'No doubt you do. Indeed, of course, you do. I will explain it all to-morrow. I can explain nothing to-night. You have so completely astonished me that I really can hardly tell which I am doing—standing on my head or my heels. Let me go. Again, a thousand times thank you.' And offering his hand to her, he prepared to move towards the window.

'Don't forget,' she said, and she looked up at him as if appealing for kindness—'don't forget to come back to me and to tell me all about yourself. I too have something to tell you about my own future.'

'Yes, yes,' said Carew, with a sort of absent eagerness,

‘Your own future—tell me about that. Tell me all. You are going to be happy, I hope.’

‘I will see you down to your boat,’ said Madame de Saint Valery, and you shall hear this unimportant piece of news by the way. I,’ she went on presently, as they emerged from the window, ‘am going shortly to become a respectable woman—that is to say, as respectable as circumstances will permit of. I don’t know’—and she gave a little hard laugh—‘that this respectability includes much respect from myself. I am going to be married—married to an Englishman. I don’t pretend to love him, but I like him, though other people laugh at him ; and I shall, I think, be pretty well able to manage him. Anyhow, considering what for two months—for two months only—my life was at Nice this winter, my life with him will be comparative peace and happiness.’

‘And who is the man?’ Carew asked.

‘Let me see. Shall I tell you?’ she said. ‘No, I think not to-night. I am somewhat shy of doing so. Wait—let me go back to the drawing-room, and I will bring you something which will explain the whole affair to you.’

In a minute or so she returned with a newspaper, which she put into Carew’s hand ; and when he had taken it she then gave him a letter.

‘When you get home,’ she said, ‘look at both. You will then know the history. The letter is written from a friend of yours to a friend of mine. You will agree that my friend has given me the best test of his friendship in sending me the most disagreeable things that other people can say about me. I am glad, too, that you should know the worst. It’s not bad. You will only think it contemptible; and when you know it, try still to keep a kind thought for me. Good-night, and give me your congratulations.’

CHAPTER XI.

THE FUTURE OPENS.

AN hour or so later Carew was in his own room again. The blank sheet of notepaper which he had so lately tried to fill, and tried in vain, still lay on the blotting-book. Now he seized his pen, which had then refused obstinately to so much as make a beginning with the name of Violet Capel. He seized his pen, and began writing rapidly. The first word of his letter was not 'Violet,' but 'Consuelo.'

When he had finished he looked at his watch. It was half past three in the morning. He remembered, with a pang of conscience, that his servant must be sitting up for him. He tinkled a hand-bell; the man appeared, blinking; and Carew told him to go to bed, leaving a door to the garden open. Before long, unable to sleep or rest, he had glided out again into the chilly and fresh night air; and again seeking his boat, he rowed across to Baveno.

The hotel where his friends were staying was dark in all its windows, and the doors were closed. But he was not in a mood to think too much about trifles, and after a great knocking and ringing he managed to wake the *concierge*. The man, when he appeared, not unnaturally was not in complete possession of his clothes, his wits, or his temper; but an immediate apology and the tender of a seductive coin restored him to his customary senses, and to something of his customary civility, and he received from Carew's hands an envelope addressed to Miss Consuelo Burton, which he engaged should be sent up to her the very first thing in the morning. It was superscribed *Immediate*; and Carew had but few doubts that no needless time would elapse before he received an answer.

And now re-embarking, a feeling of sudden vigour seemed to infuse itself into his muscles, and for the first time since his new prospects had dawned on him did the

full sense of his happiness really come to him, filling all his spirit, and disturbing it with a limitless exhilaration. The condition of his mind seemed to communicate itself to his oars, and tingle through them to the blades as they met the water. Not to the Island did Carew turn the prow, but hither and thither in aimless and wandering courses did he restlessly row himself over the sheets of the starlit lake. Great happiness, like great sorrow, will not at first suffer us to look it in the face ; and his spirit confided its secret to his muscles and his nerves before it was calm enough to confide it entirely to itself.

At last, having followed an eastward course for some time, he put his boat about, with thoughts of returning home ; and there, as he turned, far off behind the spikes of the mountains, he saw that the sky was pale with the first colours of dawn. There, too, was the star of the morning shining, bright with a trembling steadfastness ; and Carew felt that for him a star had arisen also.

He did not cease rowing, but his stroke became slower and less excited. On his spirit there descended the solemn hush of the daybreak, which makes all the earth seem like some holy sanctuary : and there came back to him two lines of Goethe's :—

The woman-soul leadeth us
Upward and on.

The lines came back to him, and remained fixed on his consciousness.

Meanwhile, on the sliding and glassy waves, that moved to left and right at the touch of his dipping oars, there began to flicker a gleam of faint saffron and rose-colour ; and the breeze of the morning laid its first breath on his cheek, and gently touched a straying lock of his hair.

‘Now for me,’ he said to himself, as he gradually neared the Island, ‘now begins the day and not the moonlight—the day of labour and action, of weariness, of disappointment—the day that follows the hush of the hopeful morning ; but hope, with her to guide me, will live through every

failure, and she will always make a perpetual morning in my heart.'

The granite steps of the landing-stage were thick with dew when he reached them. The few lights of Baveno, though still bright, looked belated, and the mounting saffron was faint in the dome over him. Having moored his boat, he still stood by the water, looking across to the spot where the heart that was his was beating; and thoughts thronged on his mind of many careers and labours to which his life, with hers, might be dedicated. Visions also, though he knew them too bright for truth, floated before him and made his being tingle—visions of great works done amongst the toiling masses, of comfort and health invading the fastnesses of degradation, and the fire of faith once more shining on eyeballs long blind to it. The feud of classes he seemed to see dying, and trust and duty replacing them like a new religion. Meanwhile, in the actual world around him, the morning breeze had by this time subsided;

And east and west, without a breath,
Mixed their twin lights, like life and death,
To broaden into boundless day.

At length a weariness, settling like dew upon his eyelids, warned him to think of rest; but just as he was turning, his hand touched one of his pockets, and he recollected that in it were Madame de Saint Valery's documents—the letter and the newspaper.

It was light enough now to read, and with a whimsical access of curiosity he drew them out and inspected them. He opened the letter first. He at once knew the handwriting. To his surprise, it was that of Lord Stonehouse. The letter was to Prince Olgorouki.

'My dear Olgorouki,' it ran, 'If you are as great an admirer as you used to be of that beautiful Comtesse de Saint Valery, whom I unfortunately have not the honour of knowing—if you are as great an admirer of her now as you were in those days at Nice when she was so much taken up

with an illustrious compatriot of yours, you will perhaps be amused to hear something about this *magnifico* she is engaged to marry. For certain reasons, which when he meets you next he will doubtless be delighted to inform you of, he has lost, so he thinks, in the eyes of the London world something of that fashionable splendour with which his own imagination had invested him ; so now, like a man of infinite resource as he is, his hopes and attentions are turned on *le high-life* of the Continent. Well, there is really a sort of genius in the stroke, not because it aims so high, but because it does not aim too high. Having learnt that Madame de Saint Valery's cousin is going to marry that odious Prince de Vacluse, he has hit on the idea of marrying himself to the cousin of a live Princess. Indeed, the Prince and he are such a pair of snobs and impostors that, upon my word, they will not pull badly together ; and in Paris, no doubt, he will from time to time still find some impecunious peer to dine with him. I think, my dear fellow, all this will amuse you, because you know at Nice how jealous you used to be of him, and how angry he was when he found our friend Carew talking to the lady under the garden wall. I shrewdly imagine that the bridegroom that is to be was hardly aware then of the fineness of his own character, and how little it would take to make his intentions strictly honourable. There is only one blow in store for him, and that is too tragical. His wife will be unable in France to retain her title, and, though the cousin of a live princess, she will only be Mrs. Inigo.'

Carew was conscious of an almost incredulous smile, and then turned to the paper. Having shaken the leaves open, he at length saw the following passage :—

'A marriage is arranged, and will shortly take place, between Geoffrey Inigo, Esq., of 50 Halkin Street, and of the Turf, White's, Marlborough, and Carlton Clubs, and Elise, Comtesse de Saint Valery, widow of the late Comte de Saint Valery, so long renowned in the diplomatic circles of Europe. An unusual interest attaches itself to this

alliance from the distinguished position of both the parties concerned, the bride-elect being about shortly to become by marriage the cousin of the Prince de Vacluse. The wedding, which will take place at the English Embassy at Paris, will, it is expected, be of the most brilliant description, most of the representatives of foreign Courts having had invitations sent to them. The Prince de Vacluse will probably give the bride away.'

One thing had struck Carew faintly the moment he discovered this paragraph. It was not in that part of the paper usually devoted to such announcements, and when he came to the end of it an audible laugh broke from him. Owing to some carelessness, some mistake, or a sense of humour in some quarter of the editorial bureau, at the end of the paragraph, in brackets, came the fatal word '[Advertisement].'

A smile was still on his lips as he slowly reverted to the house, but the solemn hopes and happiness which he trusted might last a lifetime were not disturbed, and did not even seem incongruous as the twinkling light gleamed on it, of one of life's least absurdities.

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